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A GUIDE WAS PREPARED FOR TEACHERS IN THE EIGHTH-GRADE LITERATURE CURRICULUM. THE GUIDE INCLUDED BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR LITERATURE STUDY. "THE CALL OF THE WILD" AND "THE PEARL" WERE CHOSEN FOR ANALYSIS ON A CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER BASIS. TWO ONE-ACT PLAYS, "A NIGHT AT AN INN" AND "TRIFLES," WERE INCLUDED FOR TREATMENT. ALSO, THREE STUDY UNITS WERE PRESENTED WHICH DEALT WITH THE STUDY OF NONSTORIED FORMS. (DEFINITION, EXAMPLE, AND CONTRAST AND COMPARISON). AN ACCOMPANYING GUIDE WAS PREPARED FOR STUDENT USE (ED 010 143). (WN)

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OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

THE NOVEL
THE ONE-ACT PLAY
NON-STORIED FORMS

Literature Curriculum II
Teacher Version

The project reported herein was supported through the Cooperative Research Program of the Office of Education, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

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OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

NOVEL: THE CALL OF THE WILD (London)

Literature Curriculum II

Teacher Version

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THE CALL OF THE WILD

by Jack London

(Page references are in the readily available paperback edition, Signet Classics #CD 20.)

The Call of the Wild was selected as a novel for study in the eighth grade for several reasons. It is short enough so that even the slower readers should not have much difficulty finishing it. Children like animal stories, and this is one of the few animal stories that deals to some extent with ideas, and that has some recognized literary value. It lends itself to a discussion of the various aspects of literature which this curriculum is trying to emphasize. In general, it seems to be one of the very few novels that fill the gap between the purely juvenile novel and the more complex and difficult novels that will be met in the upper grades.

When it first appeared in 1903, the book brought instant success and fame to Jack London. It is the best-known of his voluminous writings, with perhaps the Sea Wolf and the famous story "To Build a Fire" next in popularity. The edition mentioned above contains, besides The Call of the Wild, several of London's stories of the North, among them "To Build a Fire" and the less known but excellent "Odyssey of the North."

The Call of the Wild, insofar as the story line goes, is too simple and too well-known to need much said about it. Buck, a large strong dog, is stolen from his home in California to be a sled dog during the Klondike Gold Rush. He adapts to his new environment and finds a new master. When this man is killed by Indians, Buck reverts completely to savagery and ends up leading a pack of wolves. It has, of course, more to recommend it than mere narrative, or it would never have risen above the level of other juvenile animal stories. In the first place, London avoids the trap that makes animal stories either pure fable or else unreadable to a mature intelligence: the attribution of human intelligence and communication skills to animals (the Jungle Books and The Wind in the Willows come immediately to mind). Buck is a highly intelligent dog, but he remains a dog; the few times where London might be said to step over the line and invite our disbelief are minor, and need not concern the teacher of any but exceptionally intelligent eighth graders, who may wish to concern themselves with the problems that face the author of an animal story.

In the second place, London uses his story to support a thesis, or to develop a systematic view of life, or whatever one may wish to call it. The Darwinian themes of the survival of the fittest, natural selection, adaptation to environment, the impersonality of Nature, are all prominent in the story, as are some Nietzschean corollaries such as the idea of relative morality and the softening influence of civilization. Such ideas, plainly stated by the author as well as supported by the plot, are not only useful in themselves as starting points for discussion, but should also serve to show students that literature is the vehicle for more than narrative, and that an author solicits from his reader the adoption of a certain point of view toward such questions.

These aspects of the story, combined with some excellent writing about the North and life during the Gold Rush, make The Call of the Wild an excellent book with which to introduce the novel into the curriculum.

With the strong reminder that an English class is not a geography or history lesson, it might be well to give the students a brief summary of the Alaska Gold Rush--just enough to place it for them in time and space. Some map work is important, as the travels of Buck are an integral part of the structure of the book both in narrative and theme. The students should know where Santa Clara, Seattle, Dyea-Skagway, Dawson, and the Yukon River are, and should realize that a trip into the East as taken by Thornton at the end of the book is a journey into the most remote wilderness.

It is felt that discussion of the novel will be more valuable to the students if they have read it in its entirety. Consequently we suggest that they be given the book to read a week or ten days before class discussions begin. As the class takes up the novel, they can re-read it with closer attention and with the study questions in mind.

The story is divided into seven chapters. The lesson plan for the students will contain study questions for each chapter. The teaching guide for teachers will contain discussion of pertinent matter for each chapter as well as suggested answers to the students' questions.

1. Into the Primitive

This section introduces Buck, describes his key experience with the man in the red shirt, and takes him from California to the North. London moves his scene quite swiftly, lingering in California no longer than is necessary to set the scene, the time, the character, and to describe the kind of life with which Buck's later life will be contrasted. Pages 13 and 14 describe Buck and his way of life. Note that London is here setting up some contrasts for later exploitation. We are told of the highly civilized estate over which Buck ruled (13) and of the wintry nights when he lay before the library fire at the judge's feet(14). These will serve as points of reference for the contrast later in the story when the area ruled by Buck is completely uncivilized, when he plunges into icy streams instead of swimming pools, hunts for himself instead of with the judge's sons, and lies in front of different fires at the feet of.. different men, seeing things in front of the fire he never saw in California.

The abrupt reversal in Buck's way of life, from one of tranquility to abuse, and leading up to the key scene with the man and the club, is the first of several such reversals the direction of his life takes. The students should be made aware of this reversal, and be prepared to notice other abrupt shifts in the direction of his life. Simple graphs of the direction of the narrative help, sometimes. This introduction to the concept of reversal will be helpful later in the curriculum when they deal with tragedy.

Buck immediately begins to learn, as London makes quite clear (19-20). "He was beaten. . . ." et seq. Point out the beginning of the process of adaptation to his new environment. We are told that he met the lesson halfway. He is obviously following the virtuous mean between two extremes, as London describes some dogs who conciliate and others who never learn to adapt and are finally killed.

The remainder of the chapter introduces us with great economy to Perrault and Francois, the government couriers who are Buck's first masters; and to Spitz and Dave, two dogs who will both figure prominently in later episodes.

The chapter ends with Buck's introduction to snow, which will be his constant environment throughout the rest of the book. The point is emphasized that this is his first experience with snow after his life in the warm Southland. Thus on the level of his physical environment the transition from one way of life to another is emphasized. He will have to adapt to this as well as to new relationships with men and dogs. This theme, among others, is picked up in the next section.

II. The Law of Club and Fang

The students might well be brought to see that the first paragraph is excellent transition from the standpoint of the technical structure of the book. The first half summarizes what has gone before, brings the scene up to date on the beach at Dyea, presents the contrast between past and present, and leads naturally into the incidents of the death of Curly the Newfoundland. Buck is still learning, and his good fortune in learning from a vicarious experience is mentioned. At the teacher's discretion this aspect of luck might be pointed out: for instance, what would have happened in Chapter I if Buck had achieved his purpose of trying to punish Spitz for stealing his food; if Francois had not been there with his whip (21)? Perhaps it might cloud the issues--especially as it is an aspect of his development that London does not stress.

Buck's introduction to the business of a sled dog continues his education, and his quickness to learn is emphasized by Francois' remark (24). The various other dogs are then introduced, each given just enough personality to vary the monotony. His third lesson in this chapter is in learning how to sleep in the snow. Again the swiftenss of his ability to adapt is stressed (26). The students should observe that these three incidents in Buck's education are not selected haphazardly. Some discussion of technique here might be in order during a discussion period. It should be pointed out to them that any good artist must be selective, that there were any number of possible incidents that London could have selected to illustrate Buck's education, that he chose these three for excellent reasons. The death of Curly illustrates the idea contained in the chapter heading and the first paragraph: the only law in Buck's new life is the law of the fang; no fair play, no second chance. The education as sled dog shows that he is too wise to rebel against the inevitable, that he has learned the law of the club. The experience in the snow picks up the theme of adaptation to the new environment on the physical level. Or, to put it another way, the students should see that these three incidents were selected by London to illustrate Buck's adaptation on three different levels, each improtant. The death of Curly is a lesson in his relations with his fellows; the harness lesson is a lesson in his relations with his superiors; and the snow incident shows him learning to master his physical environment.

The last part of Chapter 2 is devoted to editorial comment by London. He drops the narrative of the trip up the trail to discuss directly the change in Buck (28-30). The students should see the shift in voice; they should see that there is a difference between a narrative which illustrates an author's point of view and the direct statement of that point of view by the author. They should notice that in this section London is talking about the change in Buck on two levels--the abstract and the concrete, the body and spirit, the tangible and the intangible--the inextricable duality of experience which other selections in the curriculum have emphasized. He talks about the moral change in Buck, calling a moral sense "a vain thing and a handicap in the ruthless struggle for existence." He also talks about his physical adaptation to his new environment.

In discussion, the students should begin to realize that a work of literature can be a vehicle for ideas. London here is advancing a theory of relative morality, and the students should see this. They should concern themselves not necessarily with trying to find a final answer to such questions as "Is morality a function of civilization or not?" but with how London presents his case, whether he loads the evidence for his answer, and whether the fact that his hero is a dog instead of a man tends to make us accept more readily his ideas.

By the end of this chapter the students should begin to see that here, as in other selections they have read, the subject is more than the narrative line, that the narrative is subordinated to, and narrative details selected with an eye on, the idea. If they can grasp the concept that the narrative is both vehicle for the subject as well as the subject itself, they will be well on their way to realizing that subject, form, and point of view are ultimately inseparable, and will be beginning to learn how to read.

III. The Dominant Primordial Beast

Buck's period of initiation is over. The students should observe that London shifts the emphasis of his story in this chapter from the relatively passive role of Buck as an observer and learner to the role of active protagonist. The opening paragraph in this chapter, as in the previous one, is an excellent summary, and in any discussion of the technique by which the novel is developed this should be pointed out.

The dominant incident of the chapter is, of course, the fight between Buck and Spitz, in which victory for Buck symbolizes mastery of his new environment. This theme is stated in the first two paragraphs, and London gives first one dog's reaction to the conflict and then the other's (30). Also, though there is much description and action, and although the journey into Dawson and then back out to Dyea is continued, the journey serves primarily to keep the story and the team moving and to set up the back-and-forth pendulum-like futility of these trips in to Dawson and back, and all the action is brought to relate to the final conflict.

The shift from passive to active takes place abruptly (31) and is surprising to both man and beast. The conflict is interrupted by the raid of the huskies from the nearby camp, in the middle of which Spitz tries a sneak attack on Buck, which fails. The students should observe that this interruption of the conflict is an excellent device by which the narrative achieves suspense. After this incident the journey is continued, to be interrupted again by the madness of one of the dogs at the end of which Buck is again attacked by Spitz. And again the fight is interrupted. Tension mounts as the conflict comes out in the open. There is a third incident involving another dog, Pike (36), with Buck this time the aggressor, and again the ultimate contest is interrupted. As the team reaches Dawson and heads back the situation gets worse, until the chapter closes with the final fight and Buck's victory. Buck's shift from passivity to action has resulted in his achieving of victory over his rival--the first time that he has killed.

IV. Who Has Won to Mastership

The students should be made aware of the shift in the direction of the novel that takes place in this chapter. This story, like most they will read, has a definite structural pattern. The development of a novel can be represented with some success diagrammatically, in much the same manner as the traditional graph of Shakespearian tragedy. This novel has a simple three-part structure, obvious enough so that the students should be able to grasp the pattern.

During the first part of the book (Chapters I through III and into IV) we have seen what might be called the ascending action: Buck's initiation into a new way of life and his mastery of that way of life on three levels, after a preliminary decline in his experience with the man in the red sweater. This phase of the story culminates in Chapter IV, as indicated by the title of the section. (There is, incidentally, no summary or transitional paragraph; the story continues immediately.) This first peak in the novel brings together all the levels with which London has been dealing. Buck is master of his fellows; he overcomes the objections and achieves the praise of his human masters (41-44); and this combination results in mastery of the environment, as symbolized by the record run from Dawson out to the coast. At this point the direction of the novel shifts, and there is a steady decline in Buck's fortunes until at the end of Chapter V we see him at the lowest point in the whole book--being clubbed nearly to death by an ignorant master.

This shift in the direction of the story takes place quickly. Francois and Perrault, under whom Buck has been given the time and the understanding he needs to learn how to survive, leave his life. (As a related theme, the students might observe that the caliber of the human beings in Buck's life steadily declines until he meets John Thornton: Francois and Perrault are sympathetic characters, his next masters are barely portrayed, and Hal-Charles-Mercedes are unsympathetic). The job of pulling a sled becomes dull and oppressive, and Dave is shot because of some internal injury. We can see through this and the next chapter that although Buck apparently had mastered his environment, there were too many factors over which he had no control, and that being the leader of a team of sled dogs is not the ultimate in London's scheme of values.

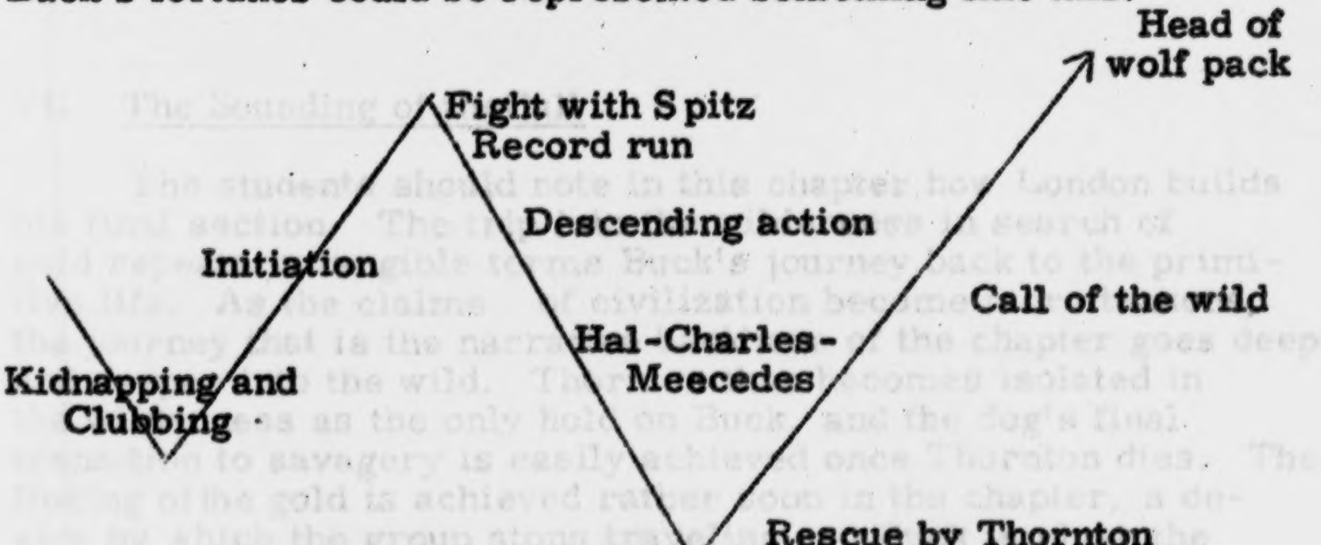
V. The Toil of Trace and Trail

This chapter continues the decline in Buck's fortunes. London shifts the focus of attention in this section from the dog to the humans. Along with the portrait of John Thornton, it is his most full developed picture of humans in the novel. As his other stories also show, he had no use for fools; Nature exacts its toll from men who can't adjust, as well as from animals. The students should see that the shift in the point of view from the dog to the people helps London illustrate this point, as well as the point that as long as Buck is subject to human control his destiny is uncertain and his potential not fulfilled. Though previously on the top of his world, under Hal-Charles_Mercedes he nearly dies.

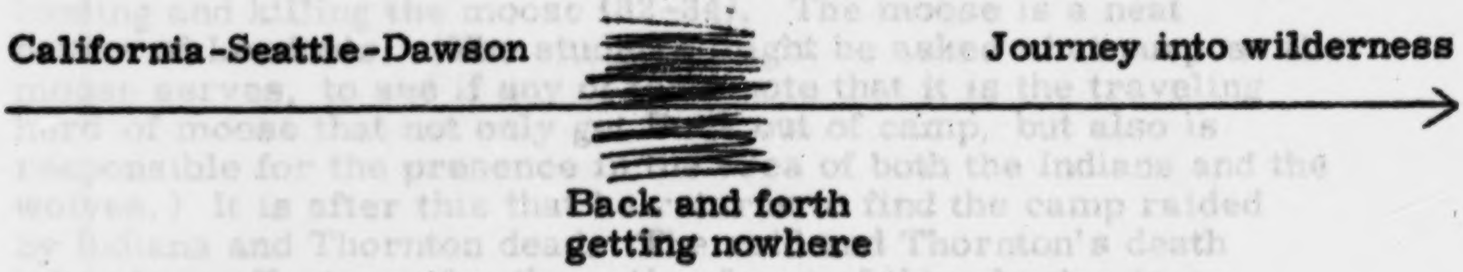
The foreshadowing of doom in the failure of the people to adjust to Nature, who is impersonal if harsh, is beautifully illustrated in the passage on 59-60 in which the team moves through the Northern springtime unaware of the burgeoning life around them. The students should see that this is the first time that Buck has not been in harmony with his environment, and that the cause is human in origin. This deadly disharmony is summarized with the description of the team staggering through the awakening country "like wayfarers to death." At the last moment, Buck is saved by John Thornton, and the rest truly turn out to be wayfarers to death. This provides a good chance to point out uses of imagery and irony.

VI. For the Love of a Man

In this chapter the direction of the novel shifts again, and we have a steady rise from this point to the end of the book. In discussions, simple diagrams can help fix patterns in the students' minds. The following are suggested as possible graphs of various aspects of the book which might be helpful. The shift in Buck's fortunes could be represented something like this:


Head of wolf pack
Fight with Spitz
Record run
Descending action
Initiation
Call of the wild
Hal-Charles-Meecedes
Kidnapping and Clubbing
Rescue by Thornton

Anything to get in their minds the idea of ascending and descending action. A graph of the basic journey narrative on which the book is structured might look something like this, in which the physical journey parallels and supports the thematic journey of Buck's reversion to wildness:


California-Seattle-Dawson
Journey into wilderness
Back and forth
getting nowhere

Thornton is presented as a contrast to Buck's previous masters, and it is for this reason, among others, that his relationship with Thornton is dealt with at such length. Under Thornton, and with love as the motivating force, he achieves new heights. The incidents London selects have a purpose, in the same way the previous incidents did. The students should see that Buck saves Thornton's life as Thornton saved his; that he attacks a man to protect Thornton just as Thornton had attacked a man to protect him; and that for love of Thornton he achieves an impossible job of sled pulling, which is more impressive and described at greater length than his previous success along this line.

At the same time London makes it clear that the process of Buck's reversion is uninterrupted. He makes the point (65) that "the strain of the primitive remained strong and active." He repeats (65) that Buck continues to live under the more savage code of club and fang, and that his love for Thornton is an exception. On page 66 London puts the conflict between the call of the wild and Buck's love for Thornton in explicit terms, in this way foreshadowing the manner in which the final and culminating chapter will be structured: Buck's increasingly long excursions into the wilderness and his return to the fireside under the urging of his love for Thornton.

VII. The Sounding of theCall

The students should note in this chapter how London builds his final section. The trip into the wilderness in search of gold repeats in tangible terms Buck's journey back to the primitive life. As the claims of civilization become more tenuous, the journey that is the narrative backbone of the chapter goes deeper and deeper into the wild. Thornton thus becomes isolated in the wilderness as the only hold on Buck, and the dog's final transition to savagery is easily achieved once Thornton dies. The finding ofthe gold is achieved rather soon in the chapter, a device by which the group stops traveling and Buck is given the leisure to respond to the call. The rest of the chapter is built on a series of incidents in which Buck responds more and more to the appeal of the wilderness, staying away longer and longer from the camp. The students should be aware of this progression. We are first told (77) that he leaves camp periodically. He next spends part of a night and a day with the wolf (78-9). We are then told that he spends several days at a time away from camp (79-80). In the last of the series he stays away for the most part of the week, hunting and killing the moose (82-84). The moose is a neat device of London's. (The students might be asked what purpose the moose serves, to see if any of them note that it is the traveling herd of moose that not only get Buck out of camp, but also is responsible for the presence in the area of both the Indians and the wolves.) It is after this that he returns to find the camp raided by Indians and Thornton dead. The raid and Thornton's death take place off-stage, for the entire focus of this chapter is on Buck's development, and to shift the scene from him to such a dramatic scene as the raid would be destructive of the effect of the chapter and the novel. In a flurry of action Buck routs the Indians, fights and is accepted by the wolf pack, and the story ends with Buck having become completely absorbed into his new environment, the head of the wolves. The journey is complete.

STUDY QUESTIONS--SUGGESTED ANSWERS
(See Student Version for questions)

Note: The study questions at the end of each chapter are designed to help the student understand the story and to serve as take-off points for class discussion. The questions are suggestive merely; they do not, nor are they intended to, exhaust all the possibilities of each chapter. Nor are they supposed to be susceptible of a one-word final answer; a novel is not a math problem.

The suggested answers below are numbered to correspond with the questions in the Student Version. They are intended to indicate the area within which discussions of the problems raised by the questions might be fruitful. Wherever possible, the students should be encouraged to reach their own answers, rather than being told.

Before beginning the detailed study of the novel, it might be well for the teacher to go throught the students' Introduction with them. It suggests methods of approach and discusses concepts with which they will undoubtedly need some help, especially those to whom this curriculum is new.

Chapter I

1. The point of view in the book is omniscient, with London concentrating primarily, but not exclusively, on Buck's frame of mind. The students should observe that he frequently steps out of this position to address the reader in his own voice.

2. The students should see that an animal in a realistic narrative cannot abstract from his experiences a verbal summary of what he has learned or what he intends to do. London's solution is to describe the experience in terms of action, and then to step back and do Buck's abstracting for him. He also generalizes from the action in direct addresses to the reader. The omniscient narrator stance further permits him to report conversations and occurrences that, were the dog himself to see them or understand them, would destroy the illusion of doggy reality.

3. This point can be developed in some detail. The students should see the operation in this chapter of narrative

and abstraction. They should note how quickly Buck is transferred from California to the North, where the action is to take place, and how incident is subordinated to theme, especially in the episode of the man in the red sweater.

4. The students should note the economy of the introduction of the sled drivers, of the dogs Spitz, Curly, and Dave. They may think that Manuel the gardener, and other of the minor charactors, are not necessary. Perhaps they are not, but it should be pointed out that Buck can hardly get himself up North.

Chapter II

1. A purely technical question, for those interested in technical questions, but of value to all budding writers of compositions. They should see that paragraph one serves as summary and transition.

2. See if any student can evolve a hypothesis for himself that covers the choice. If not, ask such leading questions as "What aspect of his new existence does each incident illustrate?" If possible, they should be brought inductively to see that London is covering three different levels of the new environment: man, animals, nature.

3. London is dealing with the dual aspect of experience with which this curriculum is concerned. Buck's changes take place on both the physical and the moral or spiritual level. They should see that the subject of the book is both levels.

4. The students should see that London is in favor of this stripping away of civilization; that civilized morality is a luxury, and a function of a softer society. He seems to apply this universally, to both man and beast.

5. Nature to London is clearly a blind, impersonal, force--hard and demanding, but not necessarily actively malignant. The class might want to read "To Build a Fire" to see this same viewpoint operating.

Chapter III

1. The students should note that as Buck's period of initiation ends, he moves from a passive to an active role.

2. The fight with Spitz is clearly the major incident here. It comes at the end of the chapter after several other incidents and after several interruptions which heighten suspense. This is good construction; it keeps us reading.

3. The students should see that each incident, though powerful in itself, entails another facet of the conflict with Spitz, and hence everything is subordinated to and leads up to the big fight. Show them that Francois foreshadows Dolly's going mad, and that the trick of biting Spitz' foreleg has been anticipated by Joe's crippling of the husky.

4. The sled is from Dawson to Dyea and back again. This begins the see-saw motion of the journey in the central chapters of the book.

Chapter IV

1. Three cheers for the Millennium, in which Art and Science are no longer in conflict!

2. Buck has not completed his journey back to complete identification with nature. He is still subject to the whim of man who, as we see in the next chapter, may drag him down to death through his own folly.

3. Buck's reversal takes place right after the peak of his victory as symbolized by the record run. He has nowhere else to go as a sled dog; it's a dead end. This fact of false victory is emphasized by the sudden reversal of fortune. '

4. The man in the fire symbolizes Buck's reversion to a more primitive existence. Students might well see the difference between this fire and the fire in his home where he sees nothing. He's making progress.

5. The team is on the way into Dawson and back out again. More back and forth.

Chapter V

1. As Buck's masters get worse, so does his lot. There is a steady decline in the quality of his masters that the students should observe. Buck will never be free or safe or assimilated until he is divorced from human control. The students may not be able to see all this, especially with Thornton.

2. London clearly has better things in mind for Buck, or else Buck would not suffer the decline in fortunes that he does, being leader of the dog team.

3. The students should see that narrative structure supports point of view, as they see the connection between the interminable series of journeys back and forth and Buck's reaching his lowest point in the story. Buck is not yet his own master.

4. London's point is obvious here. Buck, under the dominance of human masters, is not ever going to be completely successful. . Too much outside control over his destiny is exercised by people --both for good and evil, though the students probably won't be able to grasp all that.

5. By focusing on Hal-Mercedes-Charles in this chapter, London strengthens his theme that Buck is too much dependent on external forces for the satisfactory working out of his destiny. Further, the equation of man and beast as adaptive organisms is strengthened: fools or weaklings, animal and human, who can't adapt, perish.

Chapter VI

1. The pattern is more complex and not as tidy as previous ones, as the novel gets more complex in this section. The intrusion of love thoroughly complicates what up until now has been a quite simple theme. The love for Thornton complicates Buck's relationships and his progress towards the wild state. But still, the students should see that there is some orgainzing principle. Buck has not attacked a man since chapter I, and here he does for love what he had learned never to do. He saves Thornton from death in the way that Thornton had saved him, and his feat with the sled indicates complete recovery and even more prowess than the record run under the previous drivers. A labor of love.

2. London points up this conflict, and makes tha point that Thornton is an exception. Perceptive students will realize that from this time on somewhere or somehow London must dispose of Thornton. If Milton will hold still for it, we could say that love is the last infirmity of savage beast.

Chapter VII

1. Instead of the deadly back and forth of the middle chapters, the trip into the wilderness supports on the narrative level Buck's reversion to the wild, and makes it easier to dispose of his last link to humanity, Thornton.

2. The finding of the gold gives the trip a chance to stop, while Buck can keep on going.

3. Buck stays out longer and does more, and the hairy man in thefire becomes more real. This method has been prepared for in the previous chapter. The bonds that hold him become progressively more tenuous until only his love for Thornton brings him back. When that snaps, he is ready.

4. They serve as the method of elimination of Thornton. Buck's last contact with man is as a natural enemy, thus showing his complete reversion. The students might wish to discuss

why London kills off a "good guy," why he doesn't just have Thornton disappear, or have Buck just fade away.

5. This should be obvious to a good class. The focus of interest would be shifted and hence the effect destroyed if we saw the raid. We are not really concerned with Thornton in this chapter; we are concerned with Buck.

Lit/II/TV/Pearl

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

NOVEL--THE PEARL

Literature Curriculum II

Teacher Version

THE PEARL

Introduction

The problem of selecting a novel for presentation at the eighth grade level is a difficult one. There are very few novels that can withstand what is essentially the mature critical scrutiny advocated by this curriculum and at the same time be sufficiently simple in theme, structure, and vocabulary for ready comprehension by eighth graders. The problem is further complicated in finding such a novel for lower track students. After considerable search and discussion we have selected The Pearl. Among other titles considered were Captains Courageous, The Wave, Shane, The Yearling, and The Old Man and the Sea. But various considerations, such as availability in paperback form, length of the work, difficulty of vocabulary, and relative literary merit, led to the selection of the Steinbeck story.

It is shorter than the Call of the Wild, the novel selected for the upper track, and it far simpler in vocabulary. But it is deceptively simple, for some of Steinbeck's ideas are perhaps beyond the reach of lower ability eighth graders. However, it is possible to extend a discussion of the techniques and implications of the story as far as the teacher might wish to carry it within the limits of her students' ability. Thus it seems to fulfill the rather exacting requirements for a novel to be presented at this stage in the curriculum to lower track students. It is short, simple to read, and has a fable of sufficient strength and excitement to hold the interest of students; yet at the same time it deals with significant concepts, lends itself to the sort of analysis presented by this curriculum, and is a work of some literary merit by an author of recognized rank.

John Steinbeck (1902 -) is probably the best known living American writer, since the recent deaths of Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner. Winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, he is the author of such landmarks in American literature as Grapes of Wrath and East of Eden, as well as many lesser known but excellent works such as Tortilla Flat. The locale of most of his stories is the Salinas Valley of California, or Monterey, or as in The Pearl, Lower California. His work is highly erratic, ranging from novels and stories of great power to such stuff as Sweet Thursday and The Moon is Down, which are little better than trash. Steinbeck can slosh over into sentimentality of outlook and mushiness of writing with great ease, a tendency common to those who try to write simply and with compassion of the downtrodden and the misfits.

In The Pearl he avoids this pitfall. The language is simple without being too childish; the narrative is straightforward but strong enough to support the weight of meaning which is attached; and the characterization of the protagonist at least, is not so one sided that we refuse acceptance.

There are many possible approaches to the novel. Some critics see in The Pearl a variation of the biblical parable of the Pearl of Great Price (Matthew, XIII:46), in which case the novel can be seen as a savage rejection by Steinbeck of traditional Christian values, or as a parable in which too great a price is paid for the pearl of knowledge of the true nature of the world. Others see it as a novel essentially of social protest, in which the underprivileged are denied their fair chance for material prosperity by the entrenched exploiters--religion, business, and society. A third view sees the book as developing the basic theme that wealth cannot buy happiness. All of these aspects, and more, can be found in the novel, of course, and it is up to the individual teacher of the individual class to determine how and in what depth the story should be presented. Undoubtedly discussions of allegory and symbolism will be too advanced if pursued in depth, and if the students can see that the novel contains more significance than the narrative line, and see some of the symbolic significance of the parable form, the study of the story will have achieved at least its minimal purpose. Without going into the probelm of whether Kino is the allegorical representation of Everyman, for instance, the students should begin to see that it is possible to abstract some universal significance from the particular story. In the same way, they need not understand the biblical significance of the pearl or see it as a symbol of religious experience, in order to understand its importance.

It is felt that discussion of the novel will be more valuable to the students if they have read it in its entirety. Consequently we suggest that they be given the book to read a week or two before class discussion begins. As the class takes up the novel, they can re-read it with closer attention and with the study questions in mind.

Before dealing with the story itself, the students might well profit from a discussion of the introductory one and one-half paragraphs. Here Steinbeck introduces the names and relationships of his chief characters, as well as the occupation of Kino. Kino is a pearl diver in the Gulf of Mexico. He is of the original Indian stock, conquered by the Spaniards and oppressed ever since. The old language and old magic that Steinbeck mentions are of course the native Indian language and religion, as opposed to Spanish and Catholicism. It should not be necessary to go into a detailed discussion of the political or ethnic history of Mexico, but most students feel more secure when what they are studying is located for them in time and space.

Steinbeck in these introductory lines justifies the simplicity of characterization on the grounds the "tales that are in people's hearts" are usually black and white--the good guys and the bad guys. Depending on the level of the class, this idea could be discussed profitably, leading as it does into a discussion of the parable. Steinbeck's statement that the story is a parable should be noted, and his statement that many meanings can be taken from it should be pointed out to the students, in this way laying the ground for the introduction of the various themes with which the book deals.

Explication

I. Part One is divided into three sections, each merging into the other: the introduction of Kino, Juana, and the baby; the incident of the scorpion; and the experience with the doctor. The students should see that though the family dwells in poverty in a brush hut they are nonetheless content. Kino's happiness is symbolized by the Song of the Family, just as the other songs in the chapter symbolize danger to the family. The incident of the scorpion's stinging of the baby represents the intrusion of what might be called "natural evil" into the family harmony. The insect represents natural calamity, like flood or earthquake; it is not necessarily malicious. Kino's reaction is on the same natural level: he destroys the threat by striking it with his fist although he cannot undo the evil that has been done (7). At the end of the chapter he is unable to destroy the evil symbolized by the doctor, and hurts his fist in the attempt.

The decision to visit the doctor introduces one of the themes in the book, the oppression of the downtrodden. The students will probably develop a healthy hate for the doctor. They should see that he represents another sort of evil, conscious and willfull--man's inhumanity to man. He regards the Indians as animals, as we are told (12), and later refers to treating the Indians as the work of a "veterinary" (14). The town, with its "harsh outer walls and cool inner gardens" (10) and the shutting of the gate in Kino's face are symbolic of the social injustice Steinbeck is portraying. The combination of rage and fear that Kino feels toward the doctor who is a representative of the arrogant, dominant race is well put by the author (12). On being refused treatment for his baby by the doctor, Kino in anger and frustration strikes the gate which has been closed in his face (15-16). In his helpless protest, he injures his hand. The students should perceive the futility of both Kino's attack on the scorpion and his attack on the gate. In one he is the helpless pawn of fate, and in the other he is the helpless victim of an unfeeling social system.

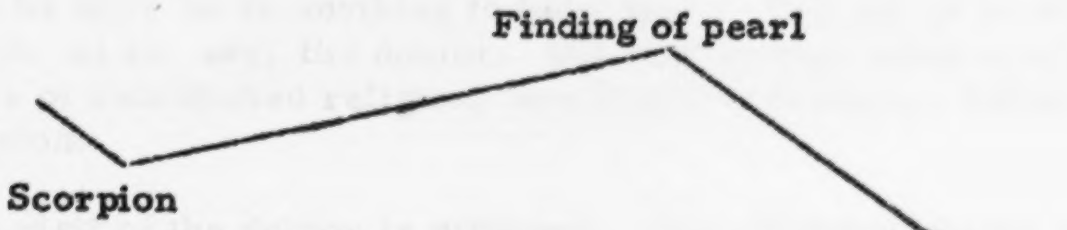
It would probably be a good idea to spend considerable time on a discussion of this first chapter. The students should be brought to see that the subject is the story of Kino and his family while at the same time it is a study of the abstractions of evil and injustice--that we have, in other words, a combination of the concrete and abstract, things and ideas, that has been found in other works in the curriculum. They should perceive that the form of the book is a series of incidents, in the vocabulary of the curriculum a storied form. They should see that the author selects his incidents with an eye to developing his subject--that though the incidents of the scorpion and the visit to the doctor grow naturally enough out of the situation, they are nonetheless selected as a means of introducing themes with which the novel is concerned. They should see that the point of view is omniscient, but that Steinbeck concentrates on Kino's reactions primarily. They should see further that the author solicits our antipathy towards the doctor by various devices of description and dialogue.

A little extra time spent on this first chapter will pay large dividends later on. If the students can be brought to see that subject grows out of form, that narrative incident can exist both for the sake of the story line and also have symbolic value, and that an author can solicit from the reader a point of view towards his narrative, the remaining chapters will be much more fruitful of discussion and interpretation.

II. Part Two deals with Kino's finding of the Pearl of the World. Again, depending on the sophistication of the class, the teacher can deal at his discretion with the significance of the "many mirages", the difficulty of distinguishing between appearance and reality in the "Gulf of uncertain light" that Steinbeck emphasizes in this chapter. This ties in with the finding of the pearl: although it has great value it turns out to buy nothing but misery for the finder. Hence it too is ultimately an illusion. The students should see that the pearl is not evil of itself. Steinbeck tells how pearls are formed (21) by purely accidental means, and the students should see that it has only that value which men attach to it; to the oyster it is an irritant.

From the technical aspect, the students should see how Steinbeck in emphasizing the importance of the canoe to Kino sets up the enormity of the canoe's destruction, which comes in a later chapter.

At the end of the chapter, things are at their highest point. The baby is well, and Kino has found the largest pearl in the world. This curing of the baby releases the pearl to be used in any way Kino wishes, for otherwise he would have had to spend it to heal the child. But now, with the child well and with a valuable jewel, the road to happiness and prosperity lies open. This is the high point in the fortunes of the family; from now on everything goes downhill. Simple graphs of the structure of a story can help students perceive the story as a whole. It might be of value to graph the action of the story during discussion periods. Such a graph of this story might go something like this:



III. Part Three can best be dealt with in four sections. The first is the effect of the finding of the pearl on other people. The students should see that Steinbeck is making a scathing commentary on human nature. With the exception of his brother Juan Tomas, no one thinks of Kino's good fortune; they all become avaricious. The priest, the shopkeepers, the doctor, the beggars, the pearl buyers, all concentrate on the pearl. By his finding of something of value, Kino becomes an enemy, or at least an obstacle, as Steinbeck makes explicit (29-30). The false competition among the pearl buyers should be made clear. They represent the system to which the proposed education of Coyotito is a threat.

The second section deals with Kino's plans for the pearl. Juan Tomas asks the key question (31): "What will you do now that you have become a rich man?" Kino's horizons keep expanding during his answer, until at last he becomes dangerous to the system. The students should see the progression of his ambitions, all perfectly legitimate, marriage in the church (now that he can pay!), clothes, a rifle,until he finally concentrates his ambition in the education of his son. This is a radical idea, as the neighbors all realize (33-34), and they prepare themselves to accept either result of this wildness. Incidentally, throughout the book the neighbors fill somewhat the role of Greek chorus, commenting on the action and supplying a response to each situation. The students should be made aware of the role of the neighbors, both in this technical aspect of the book's construction and also as representing the masses, swayed by the wind, with no opinions of their own, ready to accept any idea, prepared to moralize either way no matter what happens. It is Kino's determination to stop being a sheep, like his neighbors, that really destroys him. One of Steinbeck's themes is that man has no individual identity, and cannot exist as a single human person. Throughout the book, the teacher should point out the function of the neighbors. They are always around, always observing everything, and never doing anything. They are conspicuously absent when Kino is in trouble.

The third section deals with the visits of the priest and the doctor to Kino's hut. The priest is the first to visit (35-36). Religion is always a sticky problem to deal with in class, especially with younger children, so the teacher can handle this theme at his own discretion. Fortunately, Steinbeck is quite moderate in his treatment of the clergy. Though the song of evil enters with the priest (35) it is not loud; the priest regards the people as children (35) not as creatures to be suppressed and exploited although he fails to do anything to help them. The priest is clearly not malignant, as is, say, the doctor. His faults, and hence symbolically the faults of established religion, are faults of omission rather than commission.

The visit of the doctor is different. The students should see that the doctor plays on Kino's ignorance and fear to make the baby sick (38-41) so that he can later pretend to have effected a cure (43-45). They should further see that the purpose of his visit is to determine the hiding place of the pearl, and that the first attack on Kino is at his instigation.

-- The attempt to steal the pearl is the fourth section of this chapter (47-51). This is the first overt attack on Kino, and is the natural culmination of all that has gone before. Steinbeck complicates his theme by emphasizing the effect that all this has on Kino. The students should be brought to see that in terms of the vocabulary of this curriculum form and subject are inextricable. The writer selects incidents to narrate and aspects of a situation to emphasize, and it is on the basis of his selection that the story is structured and the subject becomes clear. On pages 37 and 47 we see the change come over Kino, as he hardens himself to meet the attack that he knows will come. His happiness and ingenuousness are destroyed as he realizes that he must distrust "everyone" (47), the peace and privacy of his home are invaded as a result of his finding the pearl, and by the end of the chapter he has become embroiled in the savagery and blood-shed that the pearl has inspired.

IV. Chapter Four is in many ways the crucial section of the story. Themes are explicitly stated, and literal and symbolic action merge. It deals with the attempt to sell the pearl to the buyers of the town. If the students are aware of the true set-up among the pearl buyers, they will enjoy the drama of the scene that Steinbeck creates. They should further understand that on a deeper level the pearl buyers symbolize the whole society that is allied in a conspiracy of exploitation of Kino and his people. When Kino defies the pearl buyers and threatens to go to the capital to see his pearl, his threat is really to the whole system, and he must be destroyed, for his success would mean an end to the exploitation of his people. This theme is made explicit in a key passage in the book, pages 69-71. We are told that "Kino had lost his old world and must clamber on to a new one" (69). He has committed himself to a course of action from which he cannot draw back, and this course of action threatens the whole structure of society. He has refused to stay put in his place as defined in the priest's sermon (59-60). The students should observe the careful structuring of this chapter, with the priest's sermon setting up the system, Kino's defiance of the pearl buyers challenging that system, and then the summary scene of conversation between the two brothers. His brother says (70), "You have defied not the pearl buyers, but the whole structure, the whole way of life, and I am afraid for you." Kino has moved quite a way in understanding and perception from the beginning of the book, and sees exactly what the issues are, as his statement (70-71) makes clear: "Some deep outrage is here. My son must have a chance. That is what they are striking at."

The chapter ends with another attack on Kino, and an attempt to steal his pearl. After this Juana wants to throw the pearl back, claiming that it is evil. Kino refuses, saying "I am a man." Steinbeck is here dealing with imponderables that the students might well wish to discuss.

Is Juana right that the pearl is evil, or is the pearl neutral and people evil? Is Kino's decision to keep trying bravery or bravado? What does a man have if he doesn't have pride? But Kino's pride in being a man destroys him--is pride good or bad? How many kinds of pride are there?

V. Part Five deals with the isolation of Kino and his family from all they have known, and the destruction of everything they possess. Up until this section Kino has still had his house and canoe, the means by which he can at least find food and shelter. In this section these are destroyed. The students should be aware of this stripping away of all Kino's possessions, a process which leaves him alone and hunted, with no refuge but flight.

Further, he kills a man. Although it is in self-defense, nonetheless it places him in great danger, for it gives his enemies an opportunity to pursue him with a reason. It also shows the gradual process of antagonism between Kino and society, a process that will be continued in the next chapter when he kills again, this time in rage.

In the beginning of the chapter Juana tries to throw away the pearl. Later on, when she finds it in the path, she returns it instead of throwing it away. The students might discuss her motives for both actions. Her conviction that the pearl is evil causes her to disobey her husband, but once defeated in her purpose, she accepts defeat and acquiesces. Her motivation is discussed to some extent on page 77. Then when she sees the dead man she realizes (78-79) that the past is gone forever, and it is she who revives Kino and urges immediate departure. With the destruction of the canoe and the burning of the house, combined with the killing of Kino's assailant, they have no other course but to run away.

VI. The story of the flight and defeat of Kino is exciting as a pure narrative of a chase, and if the students have been reading the story alertly they will have no trouble seeing in it also the inevitable defeat of the individual when society, as symbolized by the trackers, sets out to destroy the individual. From the structural standpoint, they should see that this section is rich in ironies which contribute to the theme. They should notice that Kino gets his rifle, though not quite in the way that he had intended. They should further see that the child, on whom Kino had built his hopes and whom he wanted to educate so as to free his people from the bonds of ignorance, is killed. This signalizes the total defeat of Kino.

It is hoped that the students will be able to perceive the underlying irony of the whole tale. Kino himself, with the best motives in the world, suffers a loss of innocence. The price he has to pay for his knowledge is terrible. The only true innocent in the story, the child, is destroyed, a helpless victim of his father's hopes for him. The pearl goes back where it came from, being neither good nor evil but merely the catalyst which has precipitated tragedy and death, and remaining itself as lovely as it ever was.

In summary discussions the teacher should deal with the novel in terms of the vocabulary of the curriculum, discussing such things as subject, form, and point of view. The students should be brought to see that the story is dealing with ideas as well as things, in other words that the subject is more than mere narrative. They might try to work out for themselves a definition of a novel. It is of course a storied form, and they should see that such a form is different from the non-storied works with which they have been dealing. Perhaps E. M. Forster's definition, that a novel is "a series of events connected by causality" might be a good one with which to work. If they can see that the series of events connected by causality, i.e., the narrative, is the base from which the subject grows, they should then begin to see that subject and form are in essence the same thing, that the way a thing is said is part of what is being said. Discussion of point of view can grow from this, as they are brought to see that the author governs our reactions by the incidents he selects and the way he presents them, and that in this connection description, connotation, and imagery can be of great help to the author.

Study Questions

Since these questions, which will form the basis for discussion, are aimed at lower track students, many will refer them to the text to search out detail. It is to be hoped that discussion under your guidance will lead them to draw generalizations about this work, and about novels in general. Questions marked with an asterisk are more difficult,and you may want to omit them with very slow students.

1. Notice the descriptive details at the beginning of the story. Why do you think the author chose these things to talk about? What kind of mood and setting is he establishing? Find other details in the first chapter that contribute to this background. -- This question is aimed at getting the students to understand the poverty of Kino and his people, and the social injustice under Spanish rule (12) which they have suffered for generations. But, in spite of this poverty and oppression, Kino and his family live in harmony and contentment. (2) "It was very good."

2. Throughout the story, Steinbeck has brought in repeatedly the songs of Kino and his people. What effect does this have on the reader? Why do you think no new songs were added? (p. 2) When did the song of Evil first come into the story? Find other places where the song is mentioned. When is it good? When is it evil? Why do you think the author uses this device? -- This is an old Mexican folk tale, and the device of the repeated song helps reinforce the setting of a primitive

people who had been free and happy until their virtual enslavement by the Spaniards. No new songs were added after that, but the old traditions were strong, and the life of the group lived on in each individual. In fact, only in relation to the group did the individual exist at all. Establishing this knowledge in the reader now heightens the drama of Kino's later destruction. It was his attempt to live as an individual, apart from the group, that destroyed him.

3. When Coyotito is bitten by the scorpion, when Kino and Juana take him to the doctor, when Kino finds the pearl, and when he goes to town to sell the pearl, the neighbors stand around and watch and make comments on what is happening. Why do you think Steinbeck put them into the story? -- Steinbeck has borrowed a device from old Greek drama--the chorus--and a discussion of this primitive theater, closely bound up with the religious rites and traditions of an ancient civilization will help them to see how the stylized treatment of the story, with the chorus setting the mood, highlights both the fable quality of the story, and its primitive antiquity. At the same time, it helps create suspense. The neighbors fill the role of the Greek chorus as commentators upon the action. They heighten the effect of Kino as an individual opposing the group, and dramatize the aloneness of the individual soul when he chooses to go his own way. They remain apart from the action, curious but detached spectators, as impassive as Fate.

4. What kind of person is Kino? Find a physical description. Is it very detailed? How does Kino become more real to you as the story progresses? Find details about Juana. What kind of person is she? Does she understand Kino? Does Kino appreciate her? Find examples in the text to illustrate your answers. -- The students will probably realize that Kino and Juana are idealized types rather than real individuals, although both show enough human reactions to make them acceptable to the reader. They are simple people, little given to conversation (5), happy together (2), Juana is the practical one who takes action promptly in a crisis (7, 79), and Kino draws strength from her (8, 66, 107). She understands Kino, and accepts him (77).

5. Who is the teller of the story? In its technical sense, what is the point of view of the book? Is Steinbeck making any comment of his own through this story? What do you think he is saying? -- Although the story is told in the third person by an omniscient observer, most students will feel the presence of Steinbeck himself in the story. They will readily feel the social protest against injustice. If they do not understand the conniving of the pearl merchants, it should be discusses, and other ways in which the Spanish rulers have kept Kino's people in grinding poverty. The author's scathing commentary on man's greed and grasping selfishness which makes Kino every man's enemy when he discovers the pearl (27-30) will not be too difficult for most students. A few might comment on the futility of man's struggle as an individual, both against

organized society and against a hostile universe, which Steinbeck seems to be protesting.

6. Why do you think so much stress is placed onthe importance of the canoe to Kino in the opening chapter? -- Later, when the canoe is destroyed, the author wants to be sure we realize the enormity of the loss to Kino.

*7. Chapter 2 opens with a description of the mirages commonly occurring over the Gulf (18, 19, 25). Why do you think this theme is stressed by Steinbeck? How does it relate to the pearl? -- The pearl, like the mirage, is a natural phenomenon. The importance of both lies not in themselves, but in people's reactions to them. Steinbeck is bringing into question human values, and the doubts and uncertainties that accompany the acceptance of prevailing value systems.

8. Compare the description of the pearl when Kino first found it (25) with the description of it when he finally threw it back into the sea (117). Had the pearl really changed in appearance? How do you explain this? -- The change had really taken place in Kino. The pearl merely reflected his change in attitude from hopeful expectancy of good things to come, to bitter hatred of the evil that had come into his life with the finding of the pearl.

9. Steinbeck told his story in chronological sequence, that is, he related each incident in the order in which it actually happened. Pick out the main events that happened in each chapter. -- See explication.

10. Sometimes an author prepares his reader for events that will happen later in the story. This is called foreshadowing. See how many examples you can find of incidents that point to important happenings later on. For example, when Juana says of the pearl (50), "It will destroy us all, even our son," she is speaking of a possibility that actually happens later in the story. Find other examples. -- The students should be able to find several examples of foreshadowing, e. g., p. 104: "The little pools were places of life because of the water, and places of killing because of the water, too." p. 112: "He was too late, for as he rose from his crouch the silver edge of the moon slipped above the eastern horizon."

*11. At the bottom of page 3, the author describes the activity of some ants which "Kino watched with the detachment of God." Later, when Kino is running away, ants are again introduced into the story (92). This time Kino allows them to climb over his foot. Why do you think Steinbeck introduced these details? -- Some students may recognize that Steinbeck is saying something symbolically, but how deep a meaning they will read into it will vary with the experience and ability of the students. In the first example, they may see "the big black ants with shiny bodies" as representing the Spanish rulers, while "the little dusty quick ants" are the oppressed Indians trapped by their more powerful enemy. But God or Fate is impersonal and uncaring--the injustice does not move him. Later, when Kino intervenes by putting his foot in their path, his movement is futile--they ignore him and crawl right over him. Protest is useless, the individual is powerless against the organized group.

12. In common with most good writers, Steinbeck uses words that convey special meanings, connotative words, images and symbols to create moods and express ideas. For example, in the very beginning of the story when the author is describing the contentment of Kino within his family circle (3), Kino steps outside "and a goat came near and sniffed at him and stared with its cold yellow eyes." In ancient mythology the goat was a symbol of mischief, so this incident may be regarded as symbolic of the harm that comes to Kino when he steps outside the protective influence of his people, and defies the Spanish authorities. What other symbols can you find in the story? -- All the students will probably see that the scorpion symbolizes evil, and many of them will recognize the chemical symbol (29-30), "The essence of pearl mixed with essence of men and a curious dark residue was precipitated." Others occur on p. 5--the flight of wild doves; p. 55--the mirage; p. 60--the castle; p. 65--the wolves and vultures; p. 82--the dark ones; p. 92--the ants; p. 115--the shadows.

13. When Steinbeck is writing about the evil in the town stirred up by Kino's discovery of the pearl, he says (30), "the black distillate was like the scorpion, or like hunger in the smell of food, or like loneliness when love is withheld. The poison sacs of the town began to manufacture venom, and the town swelled and puffed with the pressure of it." What kind of language is this? How does it increase the effectiveness of the story? What other examples can you find in the story? -- A discussion of simile and metaphor would be profitable here, and how they achieve vividness of expression with economy of words. There are numerous examples in The Pearl A few are to be found on pages 15, 25, 71, 73, 76, 100.

14. What kind of person is the doctor? How did you form your opinion? Find character-revealing passages in the story? -- Help the students to see that the author uses several techniques to create an effective character. Let them find what other people say about the doctor (11), what the doctor himself says (e. g., 14), how he behaves (39), how the author describes him (13), and what the author tells about him (e. g., 46). The students should see that Steinbeck has used every device to ensure that they heartily dislike the doctor.

15. Is the priest a bad man? Why does "the music of evil" sound when he enters, even though it is "faint and weak"? -- The priest regards Kino and his people as children--not as animals, but he neglects them.

He symbolizes the absence of good rather than positive evil. His are the sins of omission.

16. Read the description of the pearl dealer (61). What sort of details make you suspect that he is a phony? -- The students will be sure to recognize that his sympathetic moods turn on and off like a water faucet, and that his eyes remain cruel and steady while the rest of his face smiles. You will probably have to explain "legerdemain" for them before they will see the significance of that detail.

17. You have already discussed Kino's character as it is revealed at the beginning of the story. At what point do you notice the first change in Kino? In what other ways did he change? What has happened to him by the end of the story? -- The first change in Kino is evident after the priest's visit, when all the people have gone home. "The thin dog came to him and threshed itself in greeting like a wind-blown flag, and Kino looked down at it and didn't see it. He had broken through the horizons into a cold and lonely outside." (37) Students will cite his attitude on Juana (76), his reaction to the trackers (98), his deliberate killing of the man he shot between the eyes (114), and the empty shell of a man who returned, defeated and afraid (116).

*18. Just before he leaves his brother's hut, Kino says, "This pearl has become my soul. If I give it up I shall lose my soul." (87) At the end of the story, the author describes Kino as "a terrible machine" (113), and as he and Juana return to the town after Coyotito's death, he says, "their legs moved a little jerkily, like well-made wooden dolls" (116). Why did the author choose these descriptions? Is the author suggesting that he lost his soul by keeping the pearl? This is an example of irony. Can you find any other examples of irony in the story? -- Most students will probably see the irony of Kino getting a rifle in the end, but not at all under the circumstances he had imagined. There is also irony to be seen in the innocent laugh of the baby causing the scorpion to bite him (7), and the innocent cry of the baby causing the tracker to shoot him (113). They may appreciate the irony of the pictures in the doctor's room being religious (14). There is irony in the conversation about the pearl merchants (68),

"But suppose they had arranged it before?"
"If that is so, then all of us have been cheated all of our lives."

*19. As in all good novels, there are elements of conflict in this story. Can you identify the major conflict? What other conflicts are present? Does good or evil triumph? Does this tell you anything about the author's attitude? -- There are so many themes of conflict running through the story, it is difficult to say which is the major one. As Steinbeck commented in his introduction "perhaps everyone takes his own meaning from it and reads his own life into it." Some will see it as a conflict between the individual and organized society. Others will read

into it a conflict between the downtrodden poor and the powerful rich. Whichever way you look at it, the fact that evil seems to triumph would indicate that the author thinks the struggle futile.

20. Some short stories are longer than this novel. Obviously something other than the length of the whole determines that it is a novel. How does this work differ from a short story? -- The short story concentrates upon a single incident, there is no character development, and every element of the story is focused to create a single impression upon the reader.

The novel has more than one theme running through it. The plot progresses through many events in time, and the chief character undergoes a change as a result of these experiences. The author builds up a problem that must be solved later, and the reader is kept curious about the outcome as the writer lures the reader on, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, until the choices made by the chief character lead the story on to a conclusion.

21. In his introduction, Steinbeck says this story may be a parable. Do you think it is? Think back to the parables you read last year before you make a decision. If you think it is, what is its message? -- By definition, a parable is a story told to convey a deeper meaning. The difficulty is in the interpretation. The title calls to mind the Bible parable of the pearl of great price, but here the similarity ends, for Steinbeck's pearl brings no reward that makes it worth possessing. Again, the reader may detect a Garden of Eden theme. Kino and Juana lived in innocent harmony until the pearl brought evil into their lives. But the parallel breaks down, because the pearl, unlike the apple, was not forbidden. So we are left to do what the author suggests, to take our own meaning from it and read our own lives into it. And perhaps this soul searching was what Steinbeck intended, for he raises questions without answers, and problems without solutions. Who can comprehend Evil? How can a single soul withstand its assaults and not be overcome?

Suggestions for Composition

1. The way people act in a crisis is sometimes surprising. When the scorpion slid down the rope toward Coyotito in his cradle, Juana "repeated an ancient magic to guard against such evil, and on top of that she muttered a Hail Mary." We might have expected her to cry hysterically when the baby was stung by the creature. But she didn't. She was the calm, efficient, practical one who grabbed the baby and promptly sucked the poison from the puncture, while "Kino hoavered; he was helpless, he was in the way." You may have had an opportunity to watch people faced with a sudden emergency, or you may have been faced with one yourself. Describe the incident, and show how someone acted as a result.

2. In the opening paragraphs of The Pearl, Steinbeck uses a great many details to help the reader see the kind of place that Kino lives in. Read the first two paragraphs again paying special attention to the kind of things he mentions that suggest Kino's background of poverty, the climate, and the location. Think of details you could mention to make a reader "see" your street on a summer evening. Here are some suggestions:

garden hoses swirling and hissing
the smell of charcoal and barbecued meat
boats on trailers pulling in driveways
the sound of portable radios
people weeding their flowerbeds

Add more details of your own that will suggest summer, and evening activities, then write a paragraph describing your street on a summer evening.

3. After the doctor's visit to Coyotito's baby, Steinbeck inserts a paragraph about the fishes in the estuary (p. 42). Read it again. Why do you think the author uses this detail here? What is the significance of the last sentence about the mice and the hawks? Write a paragraph explaining what you think Steinbeck expects us to understand after reading this passage.

Lit/II/TV/NtInn

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

PART I - DRAMA

THE ONE-ACT PLAY: A NIGHT AT AN INN (Dunsany)

Literature Curriculum II

Teacher Version

Introduction

Make believe, or the desire to imitate (one of the basic meanings of Aristotle's tricky word "mimesis"), is found in children the world over. By the same token, the rudiments of drama are to be found even among the most primitive peoples. From such crude efforts to dramatize as may still be seen among the Eskimos and the tribes of the Amazon, the traditions of playmaking were passed down from generation to generation, slowly developing and refining as civilization advanced, until they became the highly complex art that drama is today.

The origins of drama, as well as certain periods in its subsequent history during the last three thousand years of Western Civilization, are still debated by scholars. But there is probably little doubt that drama and religion were closely linked during at least two periods. Dramatic ceremonies probably originated with the worship of the gods of vegetation. The celebration of the oncoming of the growing season, or of a good harvest; the natural cycle of birth, growth, death, and regeneration existing in nature; these are the natural sources for the development of ritual and dance from which the drama grew.

It is from these early beginnings that the drama as a conscious art form developed, culminating in the work of the great Greek dramatists. In the early religious history of Greece, all the people took part in the dramatic dances, but later a few outstanding actors were selected from the chorus to play the major roles. There were rarely more than three principal actors, and usually only one character appeared at a time, the chorus supplying conversation and commentary. Acting became a noble profession among the Greeks, and was limited to men. Curiously enough, during the Elizabethan period the limitation continued, although the profession lost its nobility.

With the decline of the Roman empire, the output of dramatic literature and the acting of plays also declined. With the Renaissance in Italy there was a revival of interest in drama, and an accompanying resurgence of dramatic theory. Many of the classical plays of Greece and Rome were revived, while an inborn love of music, dance, and spectacle kept alive interest in dramatic art, even during the long periods of political and religious struggles when no dramatic literature was produced.

When we come to outline the development of the drama in England, we find again a close connection between religion and drama. Though periodically challenged, the traditional view of the development of drama in England is that it was an outgrowth of the church services during the Middle Ages. In the Easter service, an angel at the tomb of Christ asks of Mary and Mary Magdalen, when they come to the tomb after the crucifixion, "Quem quaeritis... ?" (Whom do you seek... ?") They answer his question. This simple episode contains all the elements of drama: characters, plot, dialogue, setting. The natural love of people for drama resulted in the elaboration of this and other tropes, until eventually they were staged outside the churches in the courtyard.

From this point the line can be traced through miracle and mystery plays of the 13th and 14th centuries (Everyman and The Second Shepherd's Play are examples), through the Tudor Interlude (such as Bale's King John), into the early Tudor dramas (Ralph Roister Doister, Gammer Gurton's Needle), and finally into the great period of English drama (Marlowe, Shakespeare, Johson, to name just three of a host of playwrights). The drama flourished vigorously until the close of the theaters during the Puritan interregnum. With the Restoration of Charles II drama came back. Its subsequent history, from Restoration drama through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is as well known as its first-rate plays are few. In the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, with such names as Ibsen, Shaw, Chekhov, Pinero, O'Neill, Anouilh, Brecht, Williams, Miller, drama has seen something of a renaissance of its own.

Drama, unlike other forms of literature, does not exist on the printed page; the communication between author and audience takes place through the medium of an actor. (For the sake of simplicity we will ignore the closet drama, or the study of the play-as-poem that characterizes so much of Shakespearean criticism). William Shakespeare did more than other dramatist of his day to emphasize the art of acting, and his remarkable skill in characterization continues to influence the theater, even today.

It was not until the eighteenth century that different theories, or definite systems, of acting began to appear. Denis Diderot advanced the theory of a drama of real life to oppose the conventional acting of the existing classical French drama. His advice to an actor was to watch himself during the performance, and listen to his voice and give only "recollections of his emotions." Theodore Komisarjersky of the Moscow State and Imperial Theater disagreed with Diderot. He felt a better way to act was for the actor to concentrate on his inner self, or the images he had to create, allowing his imagination to control and direct his emotions and actions during the performance.

Several new and distinct theories of acting have been developed during the twentieth century, especially by the repertory theaters in England and America. The best known theory developed after 1912 is the theory of naturalism advocated by Stanislavsky, the leading producer and directory of the Moscow Art Theater. His system was based on the principle that an actor could only be natural and sincere on the stage by reproducing emotions experienced at some time or other in his life. Clearly this type of acting destroys the form and rhythm created by the author of the play, since the actor substitutes his own remembered, intellectual states in place of those of the author.

Another system, opposed to Stanslavsky's ideas, was advocated by the symbolists, the formalists, and the expressionists. The actor does not try to create any definite characters, but represents abstract ideas, conveyed through a formal style.

Today's English-speaking commercial theater emphasize the fresh, the new, and the unexpected. The practical circumstance of the "long run" as an economic necessity has forced the actor to abandon any reliance on theories as a scientific basis for acting. He has been forced to acquire a technical concept of his performance that will enable him to present the author's intention to the audience. The playwright is the motive force; the acting is the means of communication between author and audience.

Drama as a Literary Form

"In the broadest sense, a play is a complete and unified story of human life acted out on the stage in a series of motivated incidents so arranged as to excite the greatest amount of interest and pleasure in the spectator by means of novelty, variety, contrast, suspense, surprise, climax, humor, and pathos." This definition, given by Alfred Hennequin, covers the essential features of all modern plays.[1]

The story may be very simple, or quite complex, but it can be reduced to the following formula: The chief character (or characters) is trying to achieve some purpose, but he is opposed by another character (or characters) who tries to prevent him from carrying out his plans. After a series of incidents, in which first one and then the other appears to be gaining the upper hand, the protagonist finally wins out and achieves his goal, or else he is defeated (and is usually killed).

Since the story treats of human life, the actions of men and women are portrayed by characters. The incidents of the story must seem to grow out of the nature of the characters. At the same time, the incidents must react on the characters to produce the result aimed at. In other words, the characters must be suited to the story. As in real life, no two individuals are alike, so in the play, each character must be marked off from every other by real elements of character, not just tricks of dress, manner or speech. Each actor must be made to say and do exactly what is appropriate to his character, and the characters should be so selected and arranged that the prominent characteristics of each may be made more prominent by contrast with the others. This device is known as using characters as foils.

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[1] The Art of Playwriting (1899), p. 32.

A complete story is one that has a beginning, a middle, and an end, one that satisfies an audience; and the story must have Unity. All the incidents of the story must be made to cluster about a single central animating idea. If there are two series of incidents, they must be so woven together that at the end of the story it will be evident that one could not take place without the other.[1]

Of course the story must be one that can be acted upon the stage within the limitations that stage conventions impose, and it must be made up of motivated incidents. This means that the cause of every incident must be apparent by what has preceded it. Every event must be seen to grow naturally out of what has gone before and lead naturally to what comes after.

The fundamental law of modern drama is that the story must interest and please the audience. To do this, it should be fresh and original, although an old story told in a new way may be just as pleasing as a new one. Variety and contrast prevent monotony, but by far the most important means of arousing interest in suspense. Not until the last moment of the story should every item of doubt be cleared away. Suspense is one of the most potent of stage effects, but in a serious play, the audience must be made to have a dim foreboding of the impending disaster while its exact nature is left in question.

A regular increase of force and interest culminating in a strong situation is called climax. Every dramatic story should have several lesser climaxes scattered through it, and should be successively more important until the final climax is reached.

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[1] The French critics of the seventeenth century demanded three separate kinds of unity:--

1) Unity of action--that is, the play should have a single event and a single hero.
2) Unity of time--following Aristotle's statement in his Poetics, the time of the play was restricted to a single day.
3) Unity of place--there could be no change of scene during the entire play.

No one pretends to regard these old rules today.

I. A Night at an Inn - Lord Dunsany

Introduction

The study of drama at the eighth grade level will be limited to a study of the one-act play. A Night at an Inn by Lord Dunsany has been selected as the introductory play because it has a lively plot that will appeal to all levels of eighth graders, and is an original work written by a recognized playwright.

The Author

Lord Dunsany, the eighteenth Baron of his line, belonged to one of the oldest families in Irish history. Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett was born in London in 1878, and succeeded to the title and the family estates in Meath in 1899. A poet and contemporary of Yeats, he formed a friendship with Yeats that led him, along with Synge, to begin writing plays for the Irish Literary Theater in Dublin, which later became the Abbey Theater Company. However, active service with the Coldstream Guards in South Africa during the Boer War delayed his career as a playwright, and it was 1909 before his first play, The Glittering Gate,was produced at the Abbey Theater. This play was repeated in New York in 1914, and followed by A Night at an Inn two years later, along with The Queen's Enemies. Interestingly, these last two plays had not been produced in England. first.

Yeats gave Dunsany the only lesson he ever had in dramatic construction. "Surprise, " Yeats said, "is what is necessary. Surprise and then more surprise, and that is all." Certainly the twist at the end of A Night at an Inn is a surprise, somewhat reminiscent of O. Henry's short stories. Such advice might have ruined a less sensitive writer, but Dunsany's style, rich,clear, and simply expressed, transcends this weakness of contrived effect.

Perhaps because he had never known poverty and hardship, Dunsany is less concerned than Synge with human relationships, and more interested in ideas. Like Yeats, he tended to live in a dream world. In Dunsany's cosmic outlook, man is removed from man and is considered only in reference to the gods, or whatever represents the infinite. But Dunsany's gods are terrible indeed, being pure abstract thought, devoid of emotion. This sets his work apart from the lives of men, for life is action motivated by emotion, while Dunsany deals only with ideas. This is his greatest limitation, one which makes his characters unreal and detached, as in a dream. But although his is the art of an intellectual aristocrat, it is still beautiful and dramatically powerful.

Explication

The curtain rises on a room in an old English inn isolated on the solitary Yorkshire moors. The Toff, a shabby gentleman, is there with three sailors who look to him for leadership. Throughout the introductory speeches, he remains silent and aloof. We learn from the opening conversation between the three sailors that a short time ago they raided an Indian temple, and robbed the idol of its single eye, a huge ruby. Two of their companions were killed before they left the country, and even now the three priests of Klesh, the idol, are pursuing the fugitives to recover the ruby and inflict punishment upon the thieves. Albert tells how he gave the priests the slip in Hull. The Toff has hired the old inn for a period of time, and brought the sailors to it, but they are restless; thinking they have eluded the danger, they are anxious to take the ruby to London to sell it. When they tell this to the Toff, he hands them the ruby and gives them permission to go, but no sooner have they left than they are back again. The priests of Klesh are outside, having walked the eighty miles from Hull. The Toff has expected this, and made plans. He tells them they must kill the priests if they ever expect to enjoy the ruby in peace. Through his cunning, the priests are trapped, one at a time, and quietly murdered. The four then celebrate their victory, but one goes out to get some water, and comes back visibly shaken, protesting he wishes no part of the ruby. Klesh himself enters, blindly groping for the ruby. Finding it, he places it in his forehead and goes out. Then a voice is heard calling one of the seamen by name. He does not want to go, but is impelled by some mysterious force. He goes out, a single moan is heard, and apparently all is over. Each one in turn obeys the command, last of all the Toff, who make his final exit with the words "I did not foresee it."

The play is pure melodrama, but a good example of its kind. The plot is dominant throughout, reaching a climax with the entrance of the god. Bringing the god on stage is probably a weakness in the play. The imagination will conjure up a picture much nearer the playwright's intent than the theater is able to contrive. Much of the illusion is lost.

The construction of A Night in an Inn illustrates very well the technique of the one-act play. Gradually it gathers force until it is in the full swing of impressive action; then, having reached the climax, it pauses only a moment before a quick reversal carries it swiftly down to a close. The story moves quickly, and this gives power to the final blow. The dialogue has been cut to the bone, and there is a minimum of stage directions. Perhaps this brevity has been overdone. The characters are mere types lacking any subtle characterization. Obviously the story itself is Dunsany's chief concern, for the plot motivates the action, and after the entrance of Klesh, without any feeling of undue hurry, the play is brought to its logical conclusion.

The idea of dramatic contrast is evident in this play. The quiet calm and disinterested detachment of the Toff stands out against the sailors' emotions, which are quick and easy. The commonplace background of an old English inn heightens the dramatic effect of pagan priests and gods.

It might be incongruous, but the skill of the playwright manages to create an atmosphere that is acceptable to the audience.

Although as drama, the play technically has no point of view, Dunsany's philosophy can be felt in his work. He is holding up for examination what he feels to be a widespread seeking after wealth for its own sake, and the self-destruction that this pursuit usually brings. As he wrote in an article for the National Review of London in 1911:

"Something must be wrong with an age whose drama deserts romance; and a cause that soonest occurs to one is the alarming spread of advertisement, its frightful vulgarity, and its whole hearted devotion to the making of money.... It is not from business that romance has fled, but from the worshipping of it; the calf was not an unclean beast among the Israelites, but when they worshipped the Golden Calf then God deserted them."

Study Questions

Note to the teacher: The following questions have been designed to teach the form of the one-act play inductively. The students will need to refer to the work to find the answers, and also think to other works they have studied, for comparison and contrast. Questions of form predominate, but subject and point of view are also considered. Those questions marked with an asterisk are more difficult, and you may wish to omit them with slower students.

1. In common with all stories, this one has a beginning, a middle, and an end. In narrative literature, the author tells his readers all the necessary background details for the understanding of the story. How does the playwright introduce his story? What are the devices used in this play? --The students will undoubtedly see the necessity of stage directions, although in this particular play they are very brief. These provide details of setting and action. The audience is told all it needs to know through the introductory conversation between Sniggers, Bill, and Albert, which explains why they are here, and what has happened earlier.

2. Who is the chief character in the play? What kind of person is he? How is his character revealed to the audience? What is his real name? Do you know very much about him? Why or why not? --The Toff of course is the chief character, although we do not learn his name until the very end of the play. Perhaps the American equivalent for his nickname would be "The Wheel," or "The Big Shot," although these do not carry with them the implications of education and gentility suggested by "Toff." He is the brains of the outfit, with a reputation for thinking of everything and being ready for any eventuality. He is laconic in speech and aloof in manner, deliberate and calculating in his actions, and completely unemotional even with faced with the final horror of the god's

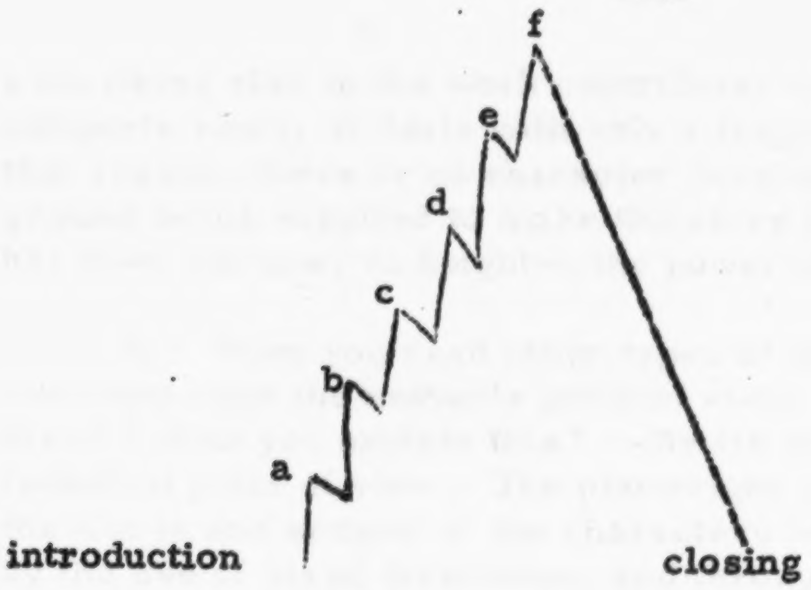
appearance. The students should be encouraged to see that his character is revealed through his own words and actions, and through the attitudes and comments of the sailors. We know very little about him, other than the fact he is a card sharp and has taken to a life of crime, but this is all we need to know. Too much detail would detract from the story. Dunsany has been content to establish him as a type, and concentrate on the action of the play.

3. Who are Bill, Albert, and Sniggers? Are they separately drawn characters? How much do you know about them? Does Dunsany's treatment of these characters give you a clue about the author's purpose? --The three sailors are not handled individually at all. They are just a group of sailors showing the characteristics of typical able seamen who serve as a suitable foil for the Toff. Obviously the author is more interested in the action than in the characters.

4. At what point does the action of the play begin? Which is the most exciting moment of the play? Everything that happens between the two incidents is the middle part of the play. How has the author kept the audience interested during this time? --The students will probably agree that the action begins with the sailors asking the Toff for the ruby, then leaving with it, and that the climax is reached with the entry of the god who claims his ruby eye. Interest has been maintained largely by the use of suspense. As each incident arises, the audience is never quite sure of the outcome. The climax, of course, comes as a surprise, and this will be discussed later on.

5. Sometimes we can draw a diagram to help us understand how the author has gradually worked the events of his play toward the climax. This way we see very clearly how one incident leads on to the next, always in an upward direction because each action must be more interesting, more exciting than the one before it, until the climax is reached. Then the play falls swiftly to a conclusion. Look back through the play, and beginning with the point where the sailors leave with the ruby, list each incident in order. Where do you think the climax comes? Draw a diagram of the action of the play. --This might very well be done by the class as a whole, using the chalk board; or in high track classes, you may wish to make it an assignment to be done individually.

a. Sailors leave with the ruby, but return at once.
b. First priest enters, and is killed.
c. Second priest enters and is stabbed, also.
d. Third priest enters and is murdered.
e. Sniggers, sent out for water, returns terrified.
f. The god enters to reclaim his ruby eye.



6. When Sniggers, who has been sent out for water, returns terrified, what are you expecting to happen? What is your reaction when the idol walks in? How has the playwright helped the audience to accept this obviously impossible situation? --Sniggers' obvious terror, and his inability to tell what he has seen, prepare the audience for something more than the police, but the entrance of the idol is a shocking moment and a complete surprise. Dunsany has prepared the audience for it by getting them to accept previously other improbably situations. The inexorable pursuit of the three black priests of Klesh, and their unexplained ability to know who has the ruby and where to find it, are accepted as supernatural powers. The horrible deaths of two of the sailors before leaving India appear to be unnatural. While the audience may dismiss the credulity of the sailors as being superstitious, the Toff cannot be so lightly tossed aside. He is a well-educated, hard-boiled, scheming intellectual, and what he accepts must be acceptable. The whole tone of the play has been very matter-of-fact up to this point, and there is certainly nothing exotic about an old English inn. This established atmosphere of normality helps the audience to accept the supernatural.

7. How do you feel about the ending? Is it a satisfying one? What saves it from being pure horror? --The students will probably agree the thieves got what they deserved. An audience is usually satisfied when things are resolved according to their sense of morality, and in this case the punishment seems to fit the crime. It is lifted from the level of pure horror by having the final action take place off stage. Drawn by an irresistible supernatural force, one by one the sailors meet their nemesis. But there is a complete absence of passion and their fate is even more coldly and impersonally meted out than the cold-blooded murder of the three priests of Klesh.

8. Before you began reading this play, you were asked what other types of literature it reminded you of. Can you answer that question now? --Undoubtedly the students will have noticed a similarity to the short story. Both types of literature focus upon a single impression, and

everything else in the work contributes to that end. While both tell a complete story, it deals with only a fragment of human experience. For that reason, there is no character development, and only enough background detail supplied to make the story possible. Everything unessential has been cut away to heighten the power of the desired effect.

9. When you read other types of literature, you were asked to comment upon the author's point of view. Does a play have a "point of view"? Can you explain this? --By its very nature, a play cannot have a technical point of view. The playwright must work out his story through the words and actions of the characters he creates. Setting is established by the use of stage directions, and through the words and actions of the characters. But it cannot be assumed that any ideas expressed by the characters are those of the playwright himself.

*10. Sometimes an author does make his opinions felt in an indirect way. The subject he chooses to write about, the way he handles it, the outcome of the story may all be indications of his own ideas. Do you feel the presence of the author at all in this play? What does he seem to be saying? --This is more than a "crime doesn't pay" type of play. Dunsany has introduced mythology as a way of expressing what to him appears to be a universal truth--man's spiritual self is destroyed by the worship of material riches.

*11. You discussed a writer's use of irony when you studied the novel. This is a device often used by a playwright too. Can you find examples of irony in this play? --You may need to question the class first to see that they remember what irony is, and give some examples. The students will not miss the irony of the Toff's last speech: "I did not foresee it." All through the play the Toff has been built up as a shrewd character who plans for all eventualities. Just before the entrance of the idol he says, "If one hang we all hang; but they won't outwit me." The thieves have committed the perfect crime and got away with it. It is ironic that their punishment comes from the gods, not from man, and that the Toff is overpowered other than outwitted.

12. Suspense is often heightened by both contrast and conflict. Can you find examples of both used by the author? --Most of the conflict is far from subtle, taking the form of physical violence on the stage. The final conflict with the idol is equally forthright since the men are powerless to resist. Dunsany has used contrast in both setting and character. The mundane kind of setting contrasts strangely with the exotic appearance of the black priests and the idol. The character of the Toff is contrasted dramatically with the rather stupid sailors.

*13. Drama is divided into two major classes, comedies and tragedies. How would you classify this play? Does it really fit either class? --While the play does contain humour, it is certainly not a comedy, yet containing many of the elements of tragedy it manages not to be tragic. Since the characters are mere types, sketchily drawn, they lack reality. The audience has no involvement with them, and so remains detached. The quick pace of the play also keeps it from being a tragedy. The action assumes the place of central importance, the characters are secondary. This lack of any genuine emotion makes it melodrama.

14. What is this play about? Is it merely an entertaining story about criminals who were punished, or is there an idea behind it all? If so, what do you think it is? --The students of course will be able to tell the subject of the play on the concrete level without any trouble, but it may be harder for them to grasp the abstract subject of the play. Some of them may say it resembles the Fable, being a story with a moral. Some may say it is a story about crime. Accept these ideas, and encourage further thinking by asking why the god was introduced. The discussion may get around to the worshipping of false gods. When the accumulation of money becomes so important that people will rob for it--even robbing other people's sacred symbols--are they not worshipping a god equally as false as the idol? If the students are not familiar with the biblical story of the Jews' worshipping the golden calf, this may be a good opportunity for presenting it to them. This play certainly seems to allude to it (Exodus 32).

15. You were asked before you read the play to notice ways in which drama differs from other forms of literature. What did you notice as you studied this play? --There is no narration in a play. The story must be one that can be acted upon a stage. Stage directions may provide for a setting, but the information the audience needs to know must be told them through conversation between characters.

Suggested Activities and Exercises

It is not intended that all students do all the exercises. You will wish to assign them according to the ability of your students.

1. With three other people, prepare to read the play aloud in class. Go through it carefully first, and decide exactly how to say each line to make it most effective.

2. Go to the library and find other plays by Dunsany. Make a list of titles that you think other class members might be interested in. Select one play and read it, either by yourself or aloud with a group.

3. Find all the places in the play where mention is made of the idol. Write a paragraph describing it as you imagine it to look.

4. The sailors believed that unless they killed all three priests of the idol, as long as the ruby remained in their possession, they, their children, and their grandchildren would be pursued. Many superstitions

were connected with the robbing of pagan shrines and temples. Have you heard of the curse of the Pharaohs? See what you can find from the library about some of the superstitions, and prepare an oral report for the class.

*5. The horrors we imagine are often more terrible than something we actually see. Would the play have been more effective dramatically if the idol had not actually appeared? Discuss this and give your reasons. Imagine you are the producer of this play. How would you handle the entrance and appearance of this idol to achieve the greatest effect? You will need to discuss lighting, costuming, positioning and so forth.

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

PART II - DRAMA

THE ONE-ACT PLAY: TRIFLES (Susan Glaspell)

Literature Curriculum II

Teacher Version

The One-Act Play: Trifles

Susan Glaspell

Introduction

Trifles was selected as our second play in the 8th grade drama unit as an example of a modern American one-act play which complements A Night at an Inn. In Susan Glaspell's work the stress is on character, for there is very little plot, but the total effect is an experience that will make a deep impression on most of the students who read it.

The Author

Born in 1882, Susan Glaspell showed an early interest in writing. After graduating from Drake University, she worked as a reporter on an Iowa newspaper for two years before deciding to give all her time to writing. Many of her short stories appeared in Harper's Magazine and the American Magazine.

She became interested in the theater after her marriage in 1913 to George Cram Cook. He was organizer and director of the Provincetown Players, and his wife became associated with the Little Theater Movement both as an actress and as an author. Among the plays she wrote for the Provincetown group was Trifles. The idea for the play came from an experience she had while still a reporter, and it is considered one of her best one-act plays. In 1931 she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for a full-length play, Alison's House. She also won recognition as a novelist.

Explication

The setting for the play is the kitchen of an empty farmhouse which shows signs of having been left in a hurry. There are dirty dishes in the sink, part of a loaf of bread stands out of the bread box, the roller towel is dirty, and the obvious neglect creates an atmosphere of gloom. This is further emphasized by the severe cold--a chilly setting for a chilling subject: murder.

The young county attorney is talking with the sheriff as the play opens. Mr. Peters, a middle-aged man, is accompanied by his wife, a slight, wiry woman, and another middle-aged couple, the Hales, who are neighbors. From their opening conversation we learn what has happened.

On his way to town with a load of potatoes, Mr. Hale had stopped at the house the previous day to see if he could talk his neighbor into sharing a party-line telephone with him. He found Mrs. Wright in a dazed condition, rocking herself and pleating her apron with her fingers. She behaved very strangely and laughed when he said he would like to see her husband. Finally she told him he was dead--with a rope around his neck. He went upstairs and found Mr. Wright lying in bed, strangled with a piece of rope which was still tightly wound around his neck. Deciding not to touch anything, he sent his companion, who had been waiting outside, to telephone the sheriff while he stayed with Mrs. Wright.

We learn that Mrs. Wright is being held in the county jail charged with murdering her husband. Meanwhile, the county attorney and sheriff have returned to the house to try to find evidence that would reveal a motive. The ladies have come to gather up a few clothes for Mrs. Wright. They are concerned because during the night all her carefully canned fruit has been ruined. The temperature had dropped to below zero, the fire had gone out, and the fruit had frozen, shattering the glass jars.

The men have more important matters to think about, and leave the ladies in the kitchen while they go upstairs searching for clues. As Mr. Hale remarked, "Women are used to worrying over trifles".

It soon becomes apparent that the chief character of the play is Mrs. Wright, although she never appears on stage. The county attorney has criticized her housekeeping. "Not much of a house-keeper, would you say, ladies?" Mrs. Hale defends her by saying, "Men's hands aren't always as clean as they might be," and "There's a great deal of work to be done on a farm." After the men have left the women both agree they would hate to have strangers poking around in their kitchens and criticizing. This establishes a bond of sympathy with the absent woman, and they begin speculating about the kind of life she had lived with her husband in this house. From the ensuing conversation we learn that Mr. Wright was a niggardly man who begrudged his wife money for clothes or social activities. Consequently she kept to herself and did not even visit the neighbors. There were no children to brighten the monotony of this frugal existence, all of which must have been hard on Mrs. Wright. She had been a vivacious young thing who liked pretty clothes and used to sing in the choir. Her husband was dour and unsociable, "a hard man" as Mrs. Hale put it, "I don't think a place'd be any cheerfuler for John Wright's being in it."

There is a great deal of irony in this middle part of the play. The clues the men are seeking elsewhere are uncovered one at a time by the women, although they apparently fail to catch the significance of them. Perhaps they are embarrassed to mention such trifles to the busy men for fear of being laughed at, or perhaps their sympathy for poor Mrs. Wright keeps them silent. The men have made fun of them for discussing the quilt Mrs. Wright was working on, and wondering if she was going "to quilt it or knot it"--a phrase that attaches importance to itself later on in the play. Mrs. Hale's remark, "I don't know as there's anything so strange, our takin' up our time with little things while we're waiting for them to get the evidence," is delightfully ironic.

Among the little things they uncover is some very irregular stitching on the quilt. "It's all over the place! Why, it looks as if she didn't know what she was about!" So Mrs. Hale promptly pulls it out and re-stitches it, with the remark, "Bad sewing makes me fidgety." Looking for paper and string to make a package of the clothes they are going to take to Mrs. Wright, they come across a bird cage with a broken door and begin speculating as to how the door was broken and what became of the bird. Even as Mrs. Peters sets it on the table, Mrs. Hale remarks ironically, "I wish if they're going to find any evidence they'd be about it. I don't like this place." The ensuing conversation reveals the loneliness of Mrs. Wright and the comfort she must have derived from having a bird to sing to her. They decide to take the quilt patches to her to help pass the time in jail. Looking for quilt patches, they uncover a pretty box, which they think probably contains scissors and sewing threads. Inside they find a piece of silk containing the bird--with its neck wrung! Just then the men can be heard approaching. Looking at her companion in horror, Mrs. Hale covers the box hastily with quilt pieces. Entering the room, the county attorney asks , in jocular tones, "Well, ladies, have you decided whether she was going to quilt it or knot it?" To which Mrs. Peters replies, "We think she was going to knot it".

Once again the men leave, bent on their serious business, leaving the women to wait in the kitchen. Mrs. Hale talks about the dreadful loneliness Mrs. Wright must have experienced, and regrets that she never came to see her. They decide not to tell her the fruit has been ruined and to take the one remaining jar to show her. As she wraps it, Mrs. Peters exclaims [In a false voice] , "My, it's a good thing the men couldn't hear us. Wouldn't they just laugh! Getting all stirred up over a little thing like a--dead canary."

The play moves rather quickly to a close. The audience knows without a doubt that Mr. Wright must have wrung the bird's neck, perhaps because its singing annoyed him, perhaps because he was jealous of the pleasure his wife found in it. It is obvious too that this provided the motive. In her rage and hurt, Mrs. Wright inflicted upon the callous, cruel man the same treatment, twisting his neck with a rope until he died. But this piece of evidence has remained unnoticed by the county attorney, who says, "No, Peters, it's all perfectly clear except a reason for doing it." The women remain silent while the men prepare to leave, still mystified about the motive, and the last words maintain the ironic tone of the play. The county attorney facetiously remarks, "Well, Henry, at least we found out that she was not going to quilt it. She was going to--what is it you call it, ladies?" To which Mrs. Hale replies, "We call it--knot it, Mr. Henderson."

Study Questions

Note to the teacher: Some of the following questions are more difficult than the others, and you may wish to omit them with slow groups. They have been marked with an asterisk. These questions have been designed to lead the students to an understanding of the play by getting them to look closely at the work itself, and through class discussion of subject, form, and point of view, arrive at some generalizations about drama as a type of literature.

1. What did the title suggest to you when you first heard it? Now that you have read the play, do you think it was a good choice? Give your reasons. --The connotation of "trifles" will differ according to the experiences of the students. For some it might suggest a delicious English dessert! But for most it will mean trivial, unimportant things. They might therefore have expected the play to be light and frivolous, a comedy. Some of them will enjoy the irony of the title. The play does indeed deal with seemingly unimportant little details, but these trifles are in reality weighty evidence that point toward the guilt of a murderess, and reveal her reason for committing the crime.

2. What is the play about? Does it have a subject on the level of ideas as well as being about people? --The students will have no difficulty identifying the concrete subject. A murder has been committed, and the sheriff and county attorney return to the scene of the crime to seek evidence that will help convict the suspect. The abstract subject may prove a little more difficult. That it deals with the relationship between a husband and wife is fairly apparent. Less obvious is the relationship between the individual and the law, between impartial justice and merciful understanding, between blind duty and obedience to a code, and compassion and pity for a tormented soul. It raises an age-old question: "What is morally right?"

3. Drama, by its very nature, has no technical point of view, as you discovered with A Night at an Inn. This play, however, presents more than one point of view. Each character, of course, has a separate point of view, but by sympathy they divide into two opposing groups. Can you identify them and say how they differ? --The expressions of the various characters seem to divide sharply into two points of view--the man's and the woman's. Of course this could also be interpreted as the law and the layman's point of view. This might be the springboard for a very interesting discussion. Mr. Hale is a layman, but he goes along with the sheriff and county attorney; while Mrs. Peters is "married to the law," yet she sides with Mrs. Hale. Do women and men really view things differently? You might have the students find illustrations from the play to back up any opinions they express.

4. Do you detect the author's attitude in this play. How do you think she feels about Mrs. Wright? What evidence can you find to support your opinion? --The author's sympathy appears to be with Mrs. Wright. The incidents she selects which arouse sympathy for her, and her treatment of the law enforcement characters, who are portrayed as unperceptive and condescending, would seem to indicate an understanding of and sympathy for the long years of mental cruelty that finally drove Mrs. Wright to commit murder.

5. How is the story introduced to the audience? In what way is the setting appropriate to the subject? How does it establish the mood for what is to follow?--The stage directions give a rather detailed description of the gloomy kitchen, cold, deserted, and disorderly, where the action takes place. The characters are also described as being "nervous," "disturbed," "fearful." This establishes an atmosphere of gloom, uncertainty, and tragedy which sets the tone for the entire play. The audience is "clued in" as to what has happened by the cross-examination of Mr. Hale by the sheriff for the benefit of the county attorney, and by the sheriff's own answers to other questions put by the county attorney. It is rather a long introduction, but absolutely essential to an understanding of the main part of the story. It also seems a little contrived. The information would certainly have been given before now, though this is explained by the attorney's absence from town the day before.

6. The action of the play takes place in the middle section. Where does the action begin? At what point does the play reach its final climax?--The action begins with the county attorney opening the fruit cupboard and discovering that the jars have shattered after freezing during the night. The discovery of the canary with its neck wrung is the final climax. At this point, the action could turn either way.

7. Do you feel satisfied with the ending? How else could the play have ended? What factors helped influence the direction the ending took?--There is sure to be a difference of opinion about the ending. Some will point out that we do not know for sure who killed Mr. Wright, nor for that matter how the canary died. If we assume Mrs. Wright to have killed her husband, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters suppressed vital evidence, which is certainly against the law. However, the play has unfolded in such a manner that we cannot help but sympathize with Mrs. Wright, and in the struggle between the law and the ladies, we are on the ladies' side. Whether satisfied with the ending or not, the students will see that finding the canary was the turning point, and the ending grew out of the women's decision to hide it rather than turn it over as evidence. Had they chosen the latter course, the county attorney would have been supplied with a motive, and Mrs. Wright's conviction practically assured. As it is, the case is not a good one. They will probably mention, among the factors contributing to the decision that was made, the men's condescending remarks to the women--not an attitude to foster cooperation!

8. Who is the chief character in the play?--There is no one chief character on stage at all. The entire play is dominated by the absent character of Mrs. Wright who gradually becomes to the audience a very real person for whom they develop feelings of sympathy and pity. The characters on stage are grouped into two opposing forces, the men who accuse her, and the women who defend and protect her.

9. What kind of person is Mr. Henderson, the county attorney? How do you know?--Mr. Henderson is young, efficient, sarcastic, critical, and lacking in warmth, sympathy, and human understanding. His character is revealed to the audience by his own words and actions, by the stage directions, and by what Mrs. Peters tells Mrs. Hale about him.

10. How much do you know about the other characters in the play, Mr. and Mrs. Hale, Mr. and Mrs. Peters? Why do you not know more?--We know only that Mr. and Mrs. Hale are a typical middle-aged farm couple, and that the sheriff and Mrs. Peters are what we would expect a sheriff and his wife to be. All the characters are sketchily-drawn types because we do not need to know more about them. Detailed characterization would detract from the effect that the playwright wishes to produce.

11. Compared with A Night at an Inn, very little action takes place on stage in this play. How has the author kept the audience interested?--The introduction arouses the curiosity of the audience. As Mr. Hale and Mrs. Peters talk together, we develop strong feelings of sympathy for Mrs. Wright. This attitude heightens the suspense we feel as the ladies produce one clue after another that appears to be evidence that Mrs. Wright had a strong motive for killing her husband. Uncertainty about the outcome keeps us interested until the very end of the play.

*12. You discussed irony in connection with the title of the play. In fact the tone of the play throughout is ironic. What other examples of irony can you find?--There are numerous examples of irony scattered throughout the play. A few of the more obvious ones are:

   a. Mr. Hale's remark, "Well, women are used to worrying over trifles, and the county attorney's reply, "And yet, for all their worries, what would we do without the ladies?"

   b. The sheriff's remark, "I suppose anything Mrs. Peters does'll be all right," and the county attorney's reply, "Yes, but I would like to see what you take, Mrs. Peters, and keep an eye out for anything that might be of use to us."

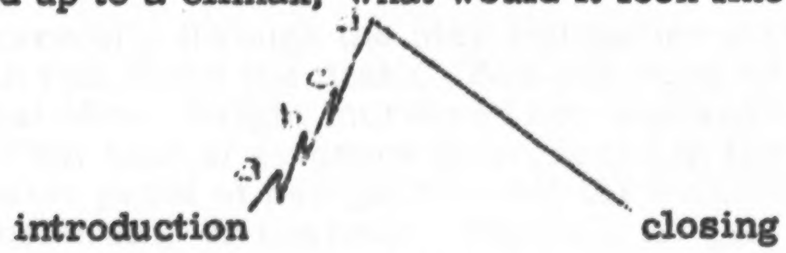
   c. Mrs. Hale's remark, as Mrs. Peters puts the bird cage on the table, "I wish if they're going to find any evidence they'd be about it."

   d. When the attorney asks the ladies whether they have decided if Mrs. Wright was going to quilt it or knot it, Mrs. Peters says, "We think she was going to knot it."

e. The county attorney's statement at the end, "No, Mrs. Peters doesn't need supervising."

13. Find details in the play that were intended to arouse your sympathy for Mrs. Wright. --Students will probably mention the frozen fruit, the county attorney's criticism of her housekeeping, learning about Mr. Wrights' character (a hard man, close), learning about the way Mrs. Wright had been as a girl ("she used to wear pretty clothes and be lively, when she was Minnie Foster, one of the town girls singing in the choir"), the canary, with its neck wrung, wrapped in silk and put in a pretty box.

*14. If you were to draw a diagram showing how the play gradually worked up to a climax, what would it look like? --



a. broken fruit jars.
b. quilt pieces showing bad sewing.
c. finding the bird cage.
d. finding the dead canary; the county attorney's entrance

15. As in most good literature, the suspense in Trifles is heightened by conflict. Can you identify the major conflict in the play? What other minor conflicts can you find?--Mrs. Peter's loyalty to the law is in conflict with her sympathy for Mrs. Wright and with Mrs. Hale's blithe ignorance of evidence. It is her decision to say nothing about the dead canary that leads the play to its ending. There is also conflict between the men and the ladies.

*16. Compare the techniques used in this play with those used in short stories. What is the major differences between the two types of literature? --The one-act play is very similar to the short story. The characters are flatly stock characters, only those details are selected for use that will contribute to the single effect the story is calculated to produce, the story itself deals with only a small incident, and the whole is woven together to form a unified experience. The major difference between the two types of literature is lack of narration in the play. Only those things that can be acted out upon the stage, or shown through stage directions, may be imparted to the audience. The author is unable to communicate directly to the audience at all, being limited by the stage conventions. There is therefore no technical point of view in drama.

17. As the play progresses, you are able to piece together quite detailed pictures of both Mr. and Mrs. Wright. Using only

what you have learned in the play, how would you describe them?--According to Mrs. Hale, Mr. Wright was not the kind of man to bring cheer to a home. He was tight-fisted with money and neglected his wife in other ways too. He didn't drink, but he was a hard man--"Like a raw wind that gets to the bone." Mrs. Wright was a very lonely, middle-aged woman, cowed by her husband, desperately yearning for company of some sort, even a bird. They were a childless couple, which added to the bleakness of the household. Mrs. Hale describes her as having been rather like a bird herself as a young girl, singing, enjoying pretty clothes, a gay young thing. But now she is not even a good housekeeper, so much of the joy of living has been sapped out of her by her barren existence.

*18. Look carefully through the play and gather all the evidence you can find about the death. Are you sure by the end of the play that Mrs. Wright murdered her husband? Why or why not? What kind of evidence is produced in the play? Is it conclusive proof of her guilt?--All the evidence is merely circumstantial, or hearsay. There is no real proof of Mrs. Wright's guilt, even though her alibi is very weak.

Suggested Activities and Exercises

Note to the teacher: You will wish to select the exercises that best fit the needs and abilities of your own students.

1. Imagine you are a newspaper reporter assigned to the case. Write a story for the paper that gives the verdict, and then tell the most interesting parts of the trial.

2. Discuss the case in a group. Then dramatize for the class the closing day of the trial. Have the prosecuting attorney's summary of the case against Mrs. Wright, and the defense attorney's final speech defending her. Let the jury withdraw, and then return in the next scene with their verdict.

3. In this play some important evidence was suppressed. Stage a debate with one person giving the legal viewpoint and the other justifying the suppression of evidence.

4. Justice is always represented as being blindfolded. Does an impartial law always best serve the innocent? Write a few short paragraphs giving your views on the morality of suppressing evidence, even assuming the accused to be innocent. What would happen to the law if everyone did this?

Lit/II/TV/F:Def

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

FORM

PART ONE: DEFINITION

Literature Curriculum II

Teacher Version

University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon
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Part I: Definition

Introduction

The term form, as it is applied to works of literature, is as controversial as it is common. Its use in this curriculum involves only one out of many possible meanings which can be attached to it, and that meaning may seem both arbitrary and simple. Furthermore, as the student advances in his work, he undoubtedly will--and should--recognize that the distinctions between form and our other two crucial terms, subject and point-of-view, are by no means water-tight and that, in fact, no one of these terms can be fully defined and understood without referring to each of the others.

Nevertheless, the concept of form is here re-introduced with new emphasis because, like the other key-terms which are employed, it is intended as an instrument for exploring the way in which a literary work is constructed. To consider form, as it will be defined here, is to ask explicit questions about the choices, judgments, and inventions which an author has undertaken in constructing his work. And these questions are most important, in the last analysis, because they help the student to understand why the work affects him as it does.

For our purposes, then, we will assume that form refers to the order, relationship, and, to some extent, the size which the author imposes upon all of the elements employed in a particular literary work. Furthermore, when we discuss form in a particular work, we tend to concentrate upon those elements which seem most important in achieving the principal effect of that work--the formal aspects, that is, which seem most significant in explaining why the work impresses us as it does.

For instance, we rarely define the form of a novel in terms of the quality of its language, nor do we often discuss the form of a lyric poem in terms of plot. To be sure, the novelist chooses and manipulates sounds, syntax, imagery, and so on in order to do the most effective job of telling his story, while, in most lyric poems, we can discover principles of structure that can be seen as analogous to a plot or a series of happenings. In each instance, however, these elements are subordinate to other, more obvious ways by which the artist most directly obtains the effect he is seeking. Accordingly, when we discuss the form of a short lyric poem, we are likely to be concerned with what the author has done with the properties of language; the basic definition of a sonnet has chiefly to do with meter, rhyme-scheme, and the actual number of lines involved in each part as well as the whole poem. And, on the other hand, when we investigate the form of most novels or plays, we generally gloss over the particular character of the language they use and concentrate upon the order of events, the arrangement of incidents out of which the plot is constructed and by which, as a rule, our chief response to the work is produced.

The student has thus far been largely occupied with what we have called the "storied" kinds of literature. Here, because plot is so often the dominant element in the work, the student has been encouraged to discover form in the sequence and number of incidents, to notice how one event leads to another. Of course, the incidents within the "story line" need not be strictly chronological nor give an exhaustive account of all that is supposed to have taken place, but may, on the contrary, appear in an order that violates literal chronology, omits many things which the reader is left to infer, and concentrates intensively upon episodes or scenes of particular importance. Nonetheless, such works do involve a sequence of events, and these events, with their causal connection, are generally what we think of as the principal "putting-together," the form, of such a work.

The non-storied kinds of literature--and they range from the simplest lyric to the most complex piece of expository prose--do not offer such an obvious kind of organization. They are, however, constructed upon principles of order which may be entirely as rigorous and produce an organization quite as tightly knit as the most carefully-wrought narrative. Perhaps the most useful way in which the student can begin to understand this fact is by seeing that form is not a "rare bird," encountered only in the classroom study of literature or in the writing of professional authors but that, on the contrary, some kind of organization--and hence of form--is necessary for any kind of communication that makes sense. He ought to be able to understand--preferably through the use of concrete, familiar examples--that the business of "telling" anything (the way to the Post Office, the pleasures of Little League baseball, the differences between a hill and a mountain) involves some kind of order, whether or not it is deliberately imposed.

If a student can sense the need for form in such simple, commonplace communications, the principles of order in literary works, even though they are not organized as "stories," should not seem particularly mysterious. He should feel that it is perfectly possible to isolate the essential form in such works, that is, to recognize the chief principle of organization by which the writing proceeds. And when this is done, he should be able to see that such forms may often be classified and given names, essentially by considering features in the structure of one work which are similar to the procedures found in other writings. Again, very simple examples may help to clarify the matter of classifying forms. Directions as to how to get places have a good deal in common, whether they involve the post office, supermarket, or swimming pool, and they clearly differ, as a class, from the procedures we follow in defining things, or making comparisons, or offering illustrations. If the student feels that form refers to the way in which any kind of communication is put together rather than that it is some kind of magical ingredient which is found only in serious literature, he should find it easier and more congenial, in the materials which follow, to note major principles of structure in a given work as well as their resemblance to similar principles in other works.

But, for the teacher's eye, a word of caution should be injected here. Form is rarely an end in itself; creative writers do not sit down merely to make comparisons, offer examples, construct definitions, and so on. The form of a literary work represents a series of decisions on the part of a writer. As a rule, these decisions have been made in order to achieve a particular end--to delight, surprise, explain, persuade, or achieve any of the other effects which literary art can produce. When we have said that an essay proceeds by statement and example--just as when we have said that a particular poem has the form of an Italian sonnet--we have said a good deal about how the work is constructed but we have said nothing about the effect it achieves upon its reader (or for that matter, about its particular content, tone, or quality).

This fact has three important consequences which the teacher should probably keep in mind. The first is that a purely "formal" understanding of a work, however thorough and accurate it may be, is far from a complete understanding. The formal analysis of a work can be either a preliminary to or a result of recognizing the work's ultimate character and effect, but it can never be a substitute for that recognition.

A second point is that works which appear to have a great deal in common with respect to their formal organization may be intended for widely different purposes; similarities in form, therefore, should not blind the student to vital differences in the uses to which the same form can be put. A comparison, for instance, between A and B may be offered for the simple purpose of inviting the reader freely to draw his own conclusions; it may be intended to demonstrate the obvious superiority of one over the other; it may seek to show that the similarity--or difference--between the two is far greater than appears at first sight; it may, indeed, be only a device for revealing a state of mind or producing some poetic effect, or, in fact for almost any kind of excursion which leaves the original comparison far behind.

Finally, of course, it should be clear that the list of headings under which form is considered in these materials is certainly not exhaustive. Definition, classification and division, comparison and contrast, and example are common and fruitful terms, under which a great many non-storied writings can be grouped. But writing seldom yields to completely firm categories, and the writer can achieve his goals by means which range from simple enumeration to the most intricate irony, from a mere collection of images to the most rigidly constructed formal logic.

With these precautions in mind, however, the student should be urged to pursue questions of form in this section, recognizing that form represents the matter-of-fact business of putting together those elements the author has chosen to achieve his purpose. He should realize that in non-storied works, as in those which display a clear plot, something is actually happening. Even though a work lacks characters and literal episodes, it does not "stand still," there is a sustained, meaningful procession of topics, ideas, images, or logical steps, and the relation between them is as genuine as are the ties established by chronology or cause-and-effect in narrative. No poem or essay is a mere blob of images or ideas or phrases; its critical components are carefully ordered and interdependent parts of a whole. To fish for single, isolated "beauties" in a poem or to focus exclusively on a single arresting idea in a complex essay is to go only a part of the way toward understanding the total work. Of course, close study calls for the careful examination of all relevant particulars. But it should be possible to look at these particulars in a constant awareness of the form to which they contribute and which, in turn, directly accounts for the final achievement of the work of art.

Part One: Definition

This is the first of several sections in the larger unit dealing with chiefly non-storied poetry and prose. The variety of patterns of formal structure includes definition, classification, example, and comparison/contrast. The units themselves are so arranged that teachers can pick and choose; however, it will be seen that there are various patterns of development within each. Each passage demonstrates something different about technique Depending upon the ability of the students, some passages could doubtless be reserved until the ninth grade; some could also be used in connection with lessons in composition.

The division of the study questions according to levels of difficulty deserves attention, although, like any such arrangement, it is by no means fool-proof. Despite the brevity and apparent simplicity of the selections, each has its particular kinds of richness from which no student should be peremptorily barred by untested notions of what he can or cannot understand about a particular literary work. For the particularly able student, even the most difficult or controversial questions should seem, nevertheless, to be authentic ones--questions, that is, of interest, arising from the selection itself and leading to a more satisfactory understanding of what the work achieves. For all students, the less difficult questions are designed to direct attention to particulars which must be grasped, to the form which emerges from these particulars, and to the satisfactions which careful reading and thought about each selection can produce.

Definition is in some ways the key to all the modes studied here. Later, students might reach the conclusion that all four modes are ways of defining. At the beginning, though, it might be pointed out that defining is a task we must do continually--with ourselves and others--to "fence in" our conceptions about ideas and things. In logic, definitions begin with assigning a given subject to its proper genus and species. In literature, however, many other techniques accomplish the task of forming and transmitting a clear-cut idea.

The techniques of definition in the examples here vary. The first is a riddle, by which the riddler arrives at the answer, the concrete ship, indirectly, as the riddler hopes to decoy us into thinking the answer is something else. The second defines an abstraction--gaiety--by a series of concretions. The third, ostensibly defining Cyrano's nose, also defines a variety of types in their reactions to that nose. T. H. White's "Tiger" uses several methods: etymology (false, by the way), analogy, example. Finally Faulkner defines his subject--a good writer--by stating what one is, and what one is not.

I. Anglo-Saxon Riddle #32, translated by Burton Raffel

Burton Raffel's translation of Riddle #32, a ship, is the first of the works read in this unit. As Raffel himself says, his translations are not so much literal translations as adaptations. It is to his credit, though, that his own language approaches the richness of the original.

The students should first read the poem through, attempting to guess what the answer is. Their first expectations--of a galumphing monster--should soon turn to their seeing it as a more kindly being, a ship. All the clues--the single foot, the lack of arms and hands, its ribs, carrying of cargo--should then fall into place.

The value of this poem lies not only in the fact that it is a clever riddle. It is an excellent poem as well. Raffel has used Anglo-Saxon poetic devices of alliteration ("mouth in its middle") in much the same way that the original writer would link related material. It might be pointed out to students (see Question 10) that alliteration links ideas together just as rhyme can; this similarity in sound occurs at the first rather than within or at the last of a word. Sound also enforces sense in this poem: slide, and shrieking are onomatopoeic. Another way the riddler gains intensity is by paradox: the odd-shaped monster walks swiftly on one foot. Like all good paradoxes, this one resolves itself if we know the truth.

Considering its few lines, the structure of this poem is fully developed. The first two lines are a prologue setting forth the beauties of the world (students might comment on the effectiveness of hung in line 2). The next part seems to shift course, leaving the beauties of the world for an excursion to a strange, shrieking monster. Part of the craftiness of the riddler depends upon his doing two things: setting up a decoy (an odd-shaped monster) but giving details which realistically describe a ship. (A ship does shriek as it slides against the land; it does travel in open country without hands but with ribs). Once the truth is known, we see the delightful ambiguity of how the formal structure leads us to expect one thing but see another. Still another aspect of form is the interweaving of consonant and vowel sounds within the poem. Working from example 8, students might see that s, m, and o sounds abound in the poem--and appear in important words.

Study Questions

Simple

1. What is the answer to the riddle? At what point did you begin to guess? What were your clues? At what point were you quite certain you knew the subject of the riddle? --The use of this

riddle may help the student to see that, in any paricular context, certain words have a crucial importance. Thus to seize on "clues" is to recognize that "a strange machine, made for motion" tells us that the subject of the riddle, a ship, is a manufactured object which moves and, accordingly, to "narrow down" possibilities very considerably. The point of this question is not, of course, to determine how quickly the student can guess the riddle but to call attention to the evidence, within the poem, on which his conclusion is based.

2. If the riddle is a good one, then everything that is said about the "strange machine" or "monster" also refers to something about the real subject of the riddle. What do you suppose is really meant by shrieking? By an open country? By its mouth in its middle? By its belly?--The student here is being exposed, again very simply, to the matter of analogical or metaphorical discourse. Each of the concrete images is characteristic of a fabulous monster but each stands for some aspect of the ship, its action, or its surroundings--the shrieking for its sound upon the sand, the open country for the sea, the mouth for its hollow center space, the belly for its hold. (If the student, drawing on his own experience, describes the mouth as a hatch, he is hardly to be blamed; Anglo Saxon vessels, however, were simple affairs and probably lacked permanent covering of any sort.)

3. Since we cannot completely understand the whole poem unless we know the meaning of every word, can you give the meaning of abundance? Of tribute? Of unravel?--In addition to the literal or primary meaning of abundance, the student should feel that it is an abundance that is good, bearing some of the connotations of the old noun plenty. Not only the literal but the metaphorical use of tribute should be noted, since it augments the comparison of the ship to a faithful servant or subject of man. Again unravel (which, you might point out as a linguistic curiosity, has the same meaning as ravel) is technically a metaphor, since, in its most literal sense, it refers to disentangling something physical.

4. Riddles are fun, of course, but perhaps the man who wrote this one wanted to do more than simply entertain us with a puzzle to be solved. How do you think he feels about the real subject of the riddle? Does he admire it? Dislike it? Fear it? Or does he simply tell us about it in language which doesn't reflect any feelings about it at all? Point to the particular words or phrases that help you to answer this question. --When the riddle-maker chooses his analogies, he does so in a way which not only lets us know what he is talking about but how he feels--and presumably wishes us to feel--about what he is talking about. Among the things which the student might point to as sources of our feeling that the poem is "more than a riddle" are the general proposition about the world's beauty in the first two lines, the strange and rather awesome characterization of the monstrous machine and the admiring and grateful attitude which succeeds this.

5. Definitions--even in riddles--tell us what things look like and sound like, where they are to be found, how they operate or what they do. How many of these things can you discover in this riddle--and where?--The student should see that the "definition" supplied by the riddle includes references to the origin of the ship ("made for motion"), a characteristic sound and its circumstances ("slide against the sand/shrieking"), its speed and method and medium of travel (it walked swiftly... in an open country), various aspects of its appearance and construction, and its immediate function (it "loads/its belly with food") and general usefulness.

Intermediate

6. We have already referred to this riddle as a poem. What makes it a poem rather than a piece of prose?--The absence of rhyme and of any very regular meter in the poem makes this a somewhat sticky question. If some students feel that there are qualities in the diction--what amounts to a succession of images, perhaps, or the fact that the language is almost entirely metaphorical, that is, non-literal--they should certainly be encouraged to explore the view that poetry somehow is concerned with other tasks than direct, explicit communication. Certainly some such observation as "it sounds like poetry" is not be lightly dismissed but can serve for a discussion of such a question as "Do poets use a 'special' language?" On the other hand, silly as it may seem, the discussion might begin by the student's observing the simple fact that the poem is divided, typographically, into lines which make it look like a poem. This will focus attention upon the deliberate arrangement of the poem into lines, about which a number of things can be said. For example they predominantly (though not uniformly) have four stresses (tetrameter) and display a predominantly (although again by no means uniformly) iambic foot. You may wish to point out that, in fact, the first line is a completely regular line of iambic tetrameter and, in a sense, sets a pattern which is varied and departed from--but never too radically--in the lines which follow. And you should probably let the students know that the original riddle belonged to a body of poetry in which rhyme and a regular arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables played no part, although other qualities did. These "other qualities" can be noted in the translation, among them being the fact that stresses do occur in at least one out of every three syllables, that much use is made of alliteration (see question 10), and that, in the translation at least, onomatopoeia is discernible in such words as slide and shrieking. And it is even possible that, if the students continue interested in lines, you can discuss the quality of particular lines as it is achieved by stress, by tempo, and by regularity or irregularity. Thus the opening generalization is produced in lines which move easily and regularly, while the rather awkward concept of "On its only foot, this odd-shaped monster" is presented in the most bumpy, irregular line of the poem, scanned approximately as follows:

Ŏn ĭts | ónlў | fóot, thĭs | ódd-shápĕd | mónstĕr.

7. The poem begins with a general statement which does not seem to have anything directly to do with the riddle that follows it. Is it an appropriate beginning? Can you see some sort of relationship between this statement and the subject of the riddle? Perhaps it will be helpful for you to re-state what's said in the opening lines, using your own words. --The poem opens with a devout generalization about the diversified kinds of beauty with which the world is hung, including beautiful things ("works of hands") which man makes. Thus it is that the riddle proper can be seen as dealing with one kind of man-made beauty. And the more perceptive students may even point out that the "beauty" of the ship is not conventionally presented--that it is not regarded as "beautiful-looking" in the way a calendar painting might represent a sail-boat, but that, ultimately, its "beauty" is found in its usefulness.

8. In the first six or eight lines of the poem there are a number of details about the "machine" or "monster." Circle the words which seem to describe the "monster" as it is seen in this part of the poem: beautiful, strange, frightening, graceful, useful, purposeful, intelligent.--The details in the early part of the poem seem directed toward forming an attitude which may be approximated by the words strange and perhaps frightening; certainly the choice of any of the alternatives would be hard to defend.

9. But, toward the end of the poem, there seems to be a change in attitude toward the monster and we are asked to see it in a different way. Where does that change occur? Circle the words which now best describe the monster as it appears in the latter part of the poem: beautiful, frightening, strange, graceful, useful, faithful, selfish, ugly. --In the latter part of the poem, a different aspect of the ship is stressed; here the words useful and faithful seem most appropriate. In both this and the preceding question, the student might be reminded that while (as suggested in question 7), such words as graceful, beautiful, etc. might well be applied to ships of many kinds, they are not relevant to the aspects of the ship which are central to this particular poem.

10. Like any poet, the man who made this riddle chose his words carefully. There isn't any very strict rhyme, but can you detect ways in which sounds are repeated? Can you find repetition in the lines: "I saw a strange machine, made/ For motion, slide against the sand"? Why is this repetition like rhyme? Why is it different from rhyme?--Alliteration, of which the poem, in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, furnished good examples, is, like rhyme, one of the devices which exploits the physical property of sounds. The student should understand that it refers to the repetition of initial sounds in words, whether vowel or consonant, as compared to the repetition of final syllables which constitutes rhyme. As slogan-makers and advertisers know very well, alliteration seems to arrest our attention and alliterative phrases seem somehow easier to remember than many others. Beyond this, the student might recognize that the effects of alliteration

can vary with the sounds involved with respect to such things as tempo and ease of pronunciation (He might even compare the names of Easy-Off and Kitchen Klenzer.)

Hard

11. One way of discussing the form of this riddle is to divide it into parts. How many parts do you find in it--and where does each begin and end? Could you describe what each of these parts does?--In the absence of any clear prosodic division into parts, the poem can be most plainly divided by its substance, by shifts in the general character of what is being said. The most obvious division can be stated about as follows: Lines 1-2 offer a generalization about the different ways in which the world is beautiful, one of the manifestations of this beauty being the subject of what is to follow; lines 3-10 stress the sound and appearance of the ship in terms which emphasize its "strangeness" and, as the image of the monster builds-up, appear to be more and more "riddling" (although, with each detail, our supply of clues increases); lines 12-14 shift to the work or function of the ship, not only supplying a new, different class of clue but revealing for the first time that, despite its oddness, the "monster" is useful, a welcome, faithful servant. The final line, of course, is what establishes the poem as a riddle and is the equivalent of the conventional formula, "What am I?" with which children often end riddles today.

12. Look up the dictionary definition of the word which is the subject of the riddle. What does the dictionary supply that is missing in the riddle? What does the riddle supply which the dictionary does not?--The noun ship in an ordinary student dictionary will probably receive its primary definition by use of a synonym (e.g., sea-going vessel). The student should appreciate the brevity and objectivity of such a definition as well as the usefulness of assignment to a class (a process which is almost the direct opposite of the kind of analogy which calls a ship a "monster"). At the same time he should see that the riddle--in addition to the pleasure of its "puzzle"--indirectly defines the ship by considering certain authentic properties which are ignored by the dictionary, e.g., its manufacture or origin, its speed, something of its appearance and structure, and, in a limited way, its function. He should realize, too, that the riddle reflects the poet's "subjective" feeling about ships and that this fact does not make the definition "wrong" or inadequate. He should be encouraged to understand that definitions may be advanced for many purposes and that this poet's definition of a ship, while doubtless of little use in a course in navigation, is entirely appropriate both for a riddle and as a means for allowing us to share a particular poetic vision.

II. "Gaiety," from Platero and I, Juan Ramón Jiménez

The second example of definition works not with two concrete objects but with still another approach: defining an abstraction--gaiety--by a series of concretions. The passage is by Juan

Ramón Jiménez, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1956. It is from Platero and I, a short series of sketches of the small Spanish town Moguer, its people, and the sad poet who writes of his small donkey Platero.

The sketch itself is simple, yet the choice of details shows control. The first sentence introduces the characters--small animals and children. The second paragraph deals with the white dog Diana. Here the mythological references to the chaste and fair goddess of the hunt and the moon surround the lovely and playful animal. Concrete nouns--crescent moon, tinkling bell, rolling on flowering grass with strong sensuous appeal help characterize her, as do verbs: leaping, rolling, pretending to bite (nobody really gets hurt here).

A slight shift in tone occurs in the next paragraph, dealing with the old gray goat, "coquettish as a woman" (surprising for a goat, but fitting in the gently comic world of Platero). Verbs here--butts, gambols, bleats, rubbing, pulling--show childlike activity; the single image of the daisy in her mouth further exhibits her comic coquettishness.

Jiménez then builds up to the "hero," Platero, and his careful patience with the human world of children. The mock-terror of the sentence beginning "How he frightens them..." is gently humorous, adding a touch of roughness which suddenly dissolves: it is only pretense.

As a coda, the scent of gaiety is placed in time--on an autumn afternoon, a time of year itself suggesting clear days but impending winter. These slight touches of "roughness" serve to bring out the gaiety of the children, but they are contrasted against the maturer sadness of the speaker. The ending is a summation of sharply sensuous details, but this time, chiefly sounds--baas, brays, barking, tinkling. Though ending gaily, the last paragraph might suggest to some of the more sensitive students that since they are sounds, the joy is heard from a distance: the speaker himself is only vicariously within that happy world.

Study Questions

Simple

1. What kinds of particular or concrete things are used to describe gaiety? To which of our senses do they appeal--that is, are they sounds, sights, smells, things to be tasted or touched? What part is played by each of the following elements in the essay: how the animals and children look , how they act; the sounds they make; what they think about?--The student should see that much of the essay is composed of visual images and that, naturally enough, gaiety is largely represented in terms of actions. He should see also that the appearance of the animals (the donkey's pricked-up ears, the goat with the flower in her mouth) is important, as are sounds like the tinkling bell, the goat's

bleat, and, most important, the blending of noises which one hears at a distance in the essay's last paragraph.

2. The first sentence of the little essay doesn't say anything much about gaiety. Which of the following statements seems to describe most accurately its relationship to the rest of the essay:
    a. It tells you where and when the events that follow are to take place.
    b. It states, in very general terms, the activity which is about to be described in much more particular detail.
    c. It gives the first example of gaiety, which is going to be followed by a series of similar examples, although each is different in some ways from the others.
    d. It talks about Platero, playing with the other animals and chilren, and this playing is then contrasted with the teasing and mock-fighting which is next described.
    e. It gives the reason or cause for the different kinds of action which are described in the rest of the essay.

    --The first sentence is a rather prime specimen of the "topic" sentence, a very simple general statement, whose particulars are explored in the following paragraphs.

3. How can a dog be like a crescent moon? A goat be as coquettish as a woman? A donkey be like a toy?--Crescent moon is a rather subtle simile and the student should see that the most obvious quality of the moon, its shape, is not really what is exploited for the purpose of comparison but that the dog's slimness, pure color, and perhaps elegance are here the basis for the simile. The humor of the coquettish woman figure--the gayer and more amusing becuase it is not precisely appropriate but just a bit grotesque--should be mentioned. And Platero's toylike quality seems to refer primarily to his docility, his willingness to be played with entirely at the children's whim, and perhaps, to a certain playful artificiality in his conduct with them.

4. In what ways is the last paragraph of the essay different from all the paragraphs which have preceded it? Do you think it makes an appropriate ending? Why?--The concluding paragraph differs from what has preceded it in several ways. Most obviously, perhaps, it deals almost exclusively with sounds rather than direct spectacles, blending into a kind of general impression the products or results of the particular activities that have been described, and actually moving away to a distant perspective, much as a movie camera might, from the close-up representation which has taken place. Here, too, more clearly than before, the author becomes more "subjective," expressing his own satisfactions, through exclamation, colored adjectives and verbs (clear, pure, limpid, idyllic; sharpens, surges), and such direct indices of gaiety as joy and laughter.

Intermediate

5. What do the following phrases have in common: pretends to bite his nose; charges at her gently; pulling with her teeth; butts him in the head; pretends to break into a trot? In what way do they help to define gaiety for us?--Certainly one of the central notions in the author's conception of gaiety is that it involves play in the sense of gently or humorously imitating activities that, in actuality, are serious and even fierce. The student should see the importance of mock-aggressive or mock-dangerous acts in the essay's definition of gaiety. He might ponder the extent to which play often involves the frivolous imitation of serious or grown-up activity and the fact that we even use play as an adjective to mean make-believe, as in play-train or a verb to mean pretend as in playing house or I was only playing.

6. How satisfactory do you think it would be if the piece were not called Gaiety but Contentment or Happiness or Pleasure?--None of the three suggested alternatives do justice to or are done justice by at least two of the qualities which emerge from the piece --the sense of activity and the notion of innocence, suggested by a "cast" which is limited to children and animals and the complete simplicity of their activities.

7. Why does the essay speak only of children and animals--no grown-ups?--As suggested in the foregoing question, gaiety is seen, within the essay, as largely the possession of animals and children, and, indeed, the mock-ferocity, the teasing, the mock-foolishness are almost totally "un-intellectual": they would not interest adults, whose forms of gaiety, if any, are certainly of a different order than those cherished here. This is a gaiety, as even the final paragraph suggests, that is very close to nature.

Difficult

8. In what ways does Platero seem different from the other animals and children? Is he as gay as they are?--Platero is, in a very modest sense, the hero of the little piece, accomodating his mood and behavior to requirements of the gay creatures around him. As is often true, he is the center and even the source of gaiety, but remains a little more thoughtful and more responsible than do his carefree companions.

9. The essay is not, strictly speaking, a definition of gaiety, certainly not, at least, anything like the kind of definition one would find in a dictionary. Could you suggest two or three abstract words (general words, that is, like gaiety itself) which describe what the author seems to think contributes to gaiety?--As some of the preceding questions suggest, gaiety here seems to be composed of playfulness (and in turn of frivolous or mock aggression and imitation), of innocence, untroubled by much thought, of acts and sounds which are inconsequential and, literally, meaningless," but can be relished for themselves.

III. From Cyrano de Bergerac, Edmond Rostand

Cyrano's speech on his nose from Edmond Rostand's play about the magnificent swordsman, poet, and wit was included not simply because it defines the enormous size of his nose but also because it defines various types of people in their reactions to it.

The form of the speech is quite simple. In the play it is the reply to a stupid fellow named Valvert, who has the effrontery to approach Cyrano and sneer at him, "Your nose is rather large." To this comment, unwitty in the extreme, Cyrano replies with a list of comments the fellow might have made. We see defined before us noy only Cyrano' outsize "schnozzola" but the types of reaction. We see the pedant in his love for big words and show-off knowledge; we see the rustic countryman with his "That there."

Students might like reading the speech aloud; read aloud, many of Rostand's rhetorical effects are unmistakable. The wonderful drawn-out climax of peninsula in "Descriptive's" speech becomes clear when read alous; the varied tones--Eloquent vs. Thoughtful, for instance--can be seen even more clearly. Students might realize that the variation of length of speeches helps avoid monotony of presentation.

Some explanation might be necessary for certain allusions: Roland's horn, Faustus, Aristophanes are very likely not among the acquaintance of eighth graders. But a brief note would suffice (Aristephanes was a Greek playwright who lived long ao, for instance). And they themselves can probably see the meaning of certain qualities (inquisitiveness, aggressiveness) from the speeches given such types to say.

Study Questions

Simple

1. We already know what a nose is--although noses the size of Cyrano's are pretty rare. If we were to call the passage you have read "Definition of a Nose," would this really give an adequate description of what the passage is about? What else is being described or defined?--The student should see that, on the surface, the passage represents an assortment of attempts to do justice to the size of Cyrano's nose (and not really to "define" the nost itself). He should next be able to recognize that, confronted with a spectacle, the nose, each one of the "characters" responds to it in a characteristic way and thus tells us quite as much about the kind of person he is as about the nose itself. Finally, of course, since we must not forget that this series of "speeches" is actually produced by a single character in the play, the student should recognize that the passage is a single, delightful performance by a man of great wit and imagination and that some of the matters he has considered under "point of view" regarding the character

of a "speaker" have a good deal of relevance here (see, too, question 5).

2. You will have noticed that each "character" has a name which is supposed to make what he says about the nose particularly appropriate. How is his speech appropriate to the character called FRIENDLY? What about INSOLENT? FAMILIAR? --The titles of each speaker seem justified by obvious characteristics of their remarks, so that FRIENDLY alleges a real concern for Cyrano's ability to drink and offers a helpful suggestion, INSOLENT firmly offers an outrageous assertion about what the neighbors "must suppose," and FAMILIAR's vulgarity does not even pretend, as some of the other speeches do, to be friendly or respectful or curious.

3. If you do not know the meaning of PEDANTIC, consult the dictionary. How does the speech of PEDANTIC show what this character is like? What does RUSTIC mean? How is RUSTIC's speech appropriate to his character? In your own experience --or through such means as watching television--have you run into "types" which resemble RUSTIC?--In both the pedant and the rustic we have a kind of type-casting with which the student may be familiar--at least through their modern counterparts, the typical pretentious Professor and the slow-witted, ungrammatical "rube" who shows up so often in TV Westerns, hillbilly shows, and the like. The student should see that these types are characterized largely by their choice of language--the polysyllabic references to Greek comedy of the pedant, the colloquial diction of the rustic, who finds his simile for the nose in a simple garden vegetable.

4. Since the statement by each "character" is a little speech in itself, each has its own modest "form." For example, the speech of DESCRIPTIVE compares Cyrano's nose to several objects, in a particular order. Why does it start with rock and end with peninsula? What difference would it make if the order were reversed?--It is important here, as always, that the student understand that the concept of from can be employed not only in generalizations about the total procedure the writer undertakes but also in understanding the order in which any significant part of the work is developed. The "building up" that occurs in the list of DESCRIPTIVE's comparisons is a clear example of this. The student, of course, should see that the list offers a progression of ever-larger objects, with the peninsula as a climactic conclusion; furthermore, he should see that this development is purposeful--that it conveys the impression of a man groping for a comparison which will do justice to the nose and satisfied only when he has found the largest possible object in its class.

Intermediate

5. The passage we are discussing is, of course, part of a play and, as such, helps to move along the drama. But it also tells

us something about the character of Cyrano as he produces his "definitions." What sort of man does the speech show him to be?--Although such a selection as the present one can profitably be considered as a separate, independent piece of writing, the student should be aware that such a passage, with its own principles of form, can contribute to some further purpose within the context of the work of which it is a part. Accordingly, they should see that the entire speech is a display of Cyrano's talents, his wit, his gift for characterization and mimicry, his ingenuity at metaphor, his versatility, and, in its later lines, his courage and self-esteem.

6. You will probably have noticed that each of the little speeches in the passage has its own special quality--that there is great variety, as we move from character to character. What are some of the things which are done to make each speech different from the other? You may want to consider such things as the kind of sentences which are used, the choice of words, the length of each speech.--The student should note that some of the speeches are interrogative, others simple declaratives, while others are exclamations, imperative commands, or even fragments. He should recognize the language which individualizes such characters in the over-blown rhetoric of ELOQUENT, the romantic allusions of LYRIC, the words, already noted, chosen by PEDANTIC and RUSTIC, the terse soldier-jargon of MILITARY. He should see, too, the diversity in length, in itself a source of characterization as well as of variety, ranging from the blunt, actually rather sophisticated question of SIMPLE to the elaborate speculation of PEDANTIC.

7. Though there is such variety in the speeches, they all have certain things in common, both in their basic subject and, in the most general sense, in the form they adopt. You will surely have no trouble in seeing what the subject is, but can you say anything about their broad similarity in form?--Each of the speeches plainly exaggerates the literal size or color of the nose, with, perhaps, the exception of the first statement by AGGRESSIVE, which treats the nose as a deformity or undesirable growth. The student should see that no attempt is made to describe the true appearance of the nose but only to make clear that it is monstrous and unsightly. He may further be encouraged to see how important comparison is in many of the speeches, and that this comparison is sometimes quite direct (as in many of the speeches, and that this comparison is sometimes quite direct (as in the words of DESCRIPTIVE, INQUISITIVE, and RUSTIC), less direct in INSOLENT's implicit comparison of the nose to a chimney, and rather vague in PEDANTIC's reference to the "mythologic monster," a creature whom it is hard for us to visualize and whose name itself chiefly suggests the "monstrousness" of the animal.

8. The passage contains at least one clever pun, when Cyrano insults his enemy by saying, "Of letters, you need but three to write you down--an Ass." With the dictionary's help, if you need it, describe the two meanings of letters on which the pun is based.--The

pun on letters, involving its meaning as both learning in literature and the letters of the alphabet may need to be explained to the student, but he should have little trouble seeing how it leads to Cyrano's ingeniously insulting conclusion.

Difficult

9. Students of literature are much interested in the sources of humor--the question of the kind of thing that makes us laugh. You will probably agree that Cyrano's speech is largely humorous. Can you offer any general observation as to what strikes us as funny both in the passage as a whole and in its particular parts?--This is a question which only the more able students will probably have the time and inclination to pursue in any detail. But it is also a question that might be brought to the attention of the class, however, briefly, as a reminder that form assumes true significance only when considered in the light of the effect it achieves. It is important for all students to see that the diversity, extravagance, distortion, and emotional coloration of these attempts to deal with Cyrano's nose would be plainly improper if employed in producing other kinds of definition and other kinds of effect, but that in this instance they operate in the service of humor. The more thoughtful student might wish to probe further into the sources of that humor--the intrinsic comedy of certain "types" of person, here exaggerated, the disparity between a simple object like a nose and the means here used to describe it, the enjoyable play of Cyrano's rapier-wit against the dullness of the man whose stupid observation prompted the attack, and, perhaps, the basic image of a large red nose which lies at the center of the whole performance.

IV. "Tiger," from The Bestiary, translated by T.H. White

"Tigris the Tiger" appears in T.H. White's translation of a Twelfth-Century Latin bestiary, a translation that is wonderfully witty, uproariously erudite, and often deliciously low. Like its forebears in the bestiary genre, this translation was intended, White says, as "a serious work of natural history...one of the bases upon which our own knowledge of biology is founded, however much we have advanced since it was written." With sources stretching back into often-fallacious antiquity, the scrapbooks were organized much like today's dictionaries, except that the order of development is often helter-skelter and charmingly absurd.

A variety of forms of definition appears here. In the first, etymology is the strategy. Equating tigris with tygeis (arrow) shows the penchant of earlier man to assume a verbal similarity to be a real one. Still other modes of definition follow: outward appearance (here students might ask if the writer has ever seen a tiger, calling stripes specklings), strength of body and character, and home.

The most extensive of all the mish-mash of "facts" is the story of the proper way to hunt a tigress. The moral of this exemplum is obvious--deception by appearance, unawareness of reality--although we might tend to sympathize with the motherly beast. By attributing human qualities to the tigress, the bestiarist has exemplified a common characteristic of his times: seeing within all external nature a reflection of, and warning about, his own nature. How nice to live in a world in which the very tiger existed to show man how to behave himself!

Study Questions

Simple

1. This the first definition you have studied which attempts to explain how something got its name. The history of a word, its origin and developing uses, is called its etymology and, particularly in the larger dictionaries, etymologies are included in the definition of any word. Assuming that the etymology of tiger that is given here is correct (and it is only fair to tell you that we today know it is not), what does it tell us about how the names of things develop? Can you think of other reasons why the etymology of a word can be both interesting and useful?--Here is a good place to introduce--or re-introduce--the student to the concept of etymology (a very respectable big word for his growing vocabulary). He should be able to see the intrinsic interest of etymologies and the things they tell us not only about words but about the habits of the men who use them--their desire, in this case, to name a thing with the name of something else which it resembles in some striking respect. And he should see that, although this etymology is false and simple-minded, a sound etymology is a proper and important part of formal definition, just as the knowledge of anything's history contributes to a total understanding of it.

2. How did the River Tigris get its name? Does this information help, in any way, our understanding of what a tiger is?--Perhaps the students will be amused to see that when a name is transferred from one thing to another, it can be transferred to more things--so that in this case, a river is supposed to have gotten its name from a tiger, who in turn got his from an arrow--swiftness being common to all three. Of course, what information, if any, this gives us is more concerned with men's linguistic habits than with tigers.

3. The "definition" also tells us about the tiger's principal home. How useful is such geographical information in telling us about the tiger? Can you think of kinds of words in defining which it would not be useful--or even possible--to offer such information? --The tiger's home may appear, on the surface, a naive little nugget. Actually, when an animal, plant, man-made object, or even a custom has a particular habitat or is confined to a particular part of the world, it is important to know this fact.

(We wouldn't really know much about palm trees, if we expected to find one in Greenland!) But the student should also see that geography has little part to play in the definition of dog, or ship, or gaiety.

4. By far the largest part of this "definition" describes what happens when some one steals a tiger cub from its mother. This is almost a separate little essay. Can you think of a title for it? Do you think it helps us to understand anything about tigers?--Perhaps the student can produce some such title as "Hunting Tigers" or "The Habits of Tigers" which will, at least, reveal his understanding of the paragraph as involving an activity rather than a quality of the tiger. If he views the definition with the light spirits it invites, he may even come up with something like "How to Escape from a Tigress." Most students, we may hope, will see that, although the account does very little to contribute to a solid definition, it has a great deal of charm and, perhaps, conveys the feeling--justifiably or not--that the tiger is an unusual, even a romantic beast. And the very best students may discover, in the concluding sentence, some attempt to deal with "tiger psychology," to suggest that tigers--at least the females--are prone to make a particular kind of mistake.

5. The final paragraph of the "definition" describes what a mother tiger does under certain circumstances. Do you think any such description is useful in a definition? Can you think of other activities of a tiger which might be described to give us more useful general information about the animal?--The last paragraph, after all, does discuss the habits of tigers--but only of lady-tigers under a very special set of circumstances. It can be pointed out that more general and important habits--like those of eating, hunting, mating etc.--might be described in a way which contributes importantly to the definition of an animal--or to other things like, for example, a particular nation or group of human beings.

6. How much of this entire account of the tiger is true or accurate, do you suppose? Even assuming it is all true, how useful would the account be in a class in zoology?--The student's own experience and common sense may lead him to question such information as that which describes the tiger's "speckling" or assigns him only one "principal home." And he should certainly be skeptical about the "glass ball" device for escaping from a tigress. Even if all this information were accurate, however, the definition would seem fragmentary and to a certain degree hodgepodge if one were seeking a sound "scientific" definition of the animal.

Intermediate

7. Perhaps the closest the "definition" comes to what we might expect to find in a dictionary is the sentence which begins the second paragraph and tells how a tiger "can be distinguished."

What aspects of the tiger are used for distinguishing him here? Are they equally satisfactory means of distinguishing him? Can you suggest other, more reliable means of distinguishing such an animal from other creatures?--"Distinguishing features" are, of course, most valuable in definitions, particularly when we choose to set apart the object of definition from anything else by which it may be confused. "Speckling" might, if accurate, be a perfectly sound distinguishing feature (although the student may suggest that other aspects of the tiger's appearance--size, color, and structure--might be even more useful for purposes of distinction). Speed would, of course, be less reliable, because it is a relative term and a quality which manifests itself only under certain circumstances--objections which apply with even greater force to an intangible characteristic like courage. Observations like these may lead the student to see that the job of definition may prompt us to search for what is truly distinctive or "special" about whatever we are defining --and the search may lead to various areas, including appearance, habitat, and habits (all reflected in the "Tiger" definition).

8. Assuming that the "definition" is neither very accurate nor very useful in helping us to understand what a tiger is, are there other reasons why it is interesting and worthwhile to read?--Most of us, students included, will feel a good deal of charm in this description--and charm eludes the formulations of text-books. One source of it, perhaps, is in the writer's childlike but imaginative attempt to describe a fierce and splendid animal about which he probably knows very little. The "glass ball" story is delightfully and ingeniously outrageous--having a good deal in common with the "tall tales" of our own Paul Bunyan cycle or Liars Club competitions. It might be pointed out, as well, that there is a certain attraction in mixtures of the genuine and the fabulous--that here a real creature has been endowed, whether by ignorance or by deliberate effort of imagination, with habits that are pretty incredible. And some sudents will probably recognize--and perhaps be amused by--the rather lofty moral generalization which concludes what has previously purported to be an "objective" description.

9. Each paragraph in the "definition" tells us a different "kind" of thing about the tiger. Set down in a few words the kind of thing with which each paragraph is concerned and place them in the order in which they appear in the definition. Does the order seem a good one? Would it make any difference if you juggled it around or reversed it? Compare the order of this account with the order of things in a dictionary definition. Do they have anything in common?--The parts of "The Tiger" which actually seek to provide general information follow in an order respectable enough to appear in a modern dictionary. The etymology of the word is succeeded by the distinguishing qualities of the animal--and the naming of the Tigris is actually offered as evidence that the tiger's speed is, indeed, striking. We then learn about his habitat and, in a loose sense, the long

final paragraph is devoted to his habits. But the student should see that the "cold facts" serve as the introduction to--perhaps even the excuse for--the colorful anecdote and that it is the anecdote (complete with moral) which plainly most interests the writer, as it does us.

Difficult

10. The description of the mother tiger whose cub has been stolen can be seen as a little story. At the end, the author speaks about why it is that the mother loses both her revenge and her baby. Can you explain "the zeal of her own dutifulness" in your own words?--"The zeal of her own dutifulness" is hard to paraphrase--perhaps, in fact, impossible. The student should find clues in the earlier description of the tigress's motives, "the mother's tender care," which she is impelled so strongly to display that it overcomes even her desire for revenge on the hunter. Zeal and dutifulness have meanings so close together that we may be pushing things somewhat to suggest that zeal is the actual passionate drive, which is directed by a sense of duty. It is probably enough to expect that the student recognize this "zeal" as that which combats and overcomes the animal's other drive, for revenge, as well as its judgment, since it is tricked by the same device at least two times.

11. In the final sentence, the author explains why the tigress "loses out" in language which suggests that we might learn a lesson from her--that the story might be treated as a fable, like those of Aesop. If you wished to construct a "moral" for the story, what would it be?--The actual moral presented by the story's conclusion is probably something to the effect that, in this animal--as, perhaps in other creatures including human beings --one single urge or desire can operate so strongly that it overcomes our good sense and can even frustrate its own fulfillment. Students can probably think of situations where they wanted something so badly that they behaved unreasonably and thus defeated their own purposes (for instance, by stupidly badgering a parent so badly for some long-desired gift that the parent is angered into final refusal). Quite apart from the actual moralizing conclusion of "The Tiger," the student may find interest in the means used to trick the tigress, her irrational inability to distinguish between appearance and reality, or her equally irrational refusal to learn by experience.

V. From the speech of acceptance for the Nobel Prize, William Faulkner

We might as well recognize that the Faulkner speech presents difficulties far greater than those the students have encountered in the earlier writings. It deals with problems which certainly have little immediate meaning for the student. It deals with them, too, in a thoroughly adult and sophisticated fashion. And it raises questions which--like most adult and sophisticated questions--do not yield to easy or to final answers. The teacher need not be apologetic about these facts nor directly suggest that this is "hard reading," but he may find it profitable to reveal that, with this speech and the problems it involves, the student is moving into an area of serious, important, grown-up discourse.

The speech is a particularly useful example of a non-narrative form which nevertheless has a clear progression or direction, moving in four short paragraphs from a rather humble statement of feeling on a serious occasion to a passionate statement concerning the poet's mission and an implicit exhortation that the mission be pursued. No "set questions" can successfully reveal this form in its entirety, but a brief outline of what is accomplished in the speech may be useful to the teacher for class discussion.

Paragraph One begins with a distinction between the man and his work, the work being characterized as agonizing, concerned with the materials of the human spirit, and creative of that which is new. As the award goes only for the work, the speaker holds it only in trust, using the money for appropriate purposes and the acclaim or attention of the moment for the purpose of saying something to those who will carry on the work.

Paragraph Two explains why the work is terribly difficult today, for the universal tragedy ("our" tragedy) is that fear of imminent destruction dominates all of us and, in the young writer, turns his attention from the "problems of the heart" which are the only proper matters for worthwhile writing.

Paragraph Three urges that the writer, conquering and forgetting fear, must again learn to deal with the "problems of the human heart" and gives the speaker's reason for this belief--in effect that the qualities of love, honor, pity, etc. are indispensable to the survival of a writer's work, while their absence makes it ephemeral, inhuman, and meaningless, reduced to a level at which there is neither permanence nor feeling.

Paragraph Four re-states the question of our choosing to re-learn or not re-learn these timeless things. Refusal to re-learn is equated with resignation to man's destruction or, at most, with a belief that man will somehow endure, but merely endure. To re-learn is equated with the speaker's own belief that man can not only endure but prevail, because he alone has not only a voice but a soul, a spirit. The duty of the poet (here synonymous with writer) is to remind men of these things of the spirit, for it is by knowing these things that all men will endure and prevail.

Put even more bleakly, we can say that the first paragraph justifies the speaker's addressing himself to young writers, the second states a grave problem or difficulty they face, the third prescribes the only way by which this difficulty can be overcome and the writer can assure himself of permanence, and the fourth is a statement of faith, in terms of which this course can be seen, not as a mere alternative open to the writer, but as his highest duty.

Study Questions

Simple

1. Because almost every word in this speech is of importance, we should have an accurate understanding of everything Faulkner says. What is the meaning of commensurate? Ephemeral? Doomed? Compassion?--At least some students should be able to see not only the literal meanings of these terms but the part they play in the structure of Faulkner's argument --that doomed and ephemeral are the crucial negative, against which the permanent affirmative course is contraste, that commensurate reveals Faulkner's wish to do justice to the honor that has come to him, that compassion (more than a word like pity) represents the kind of feeling for which he is pleading.

2. Faulkner's speech has been grouped with other writings in this course, all of which are, in some sense, definitions. What do you think Faulkner is defining? Circle the phrase, among the following, which seems to you to describe most satisfactorily the subject of Faulkner's definition: the Nobel Prize; the nature of fear; literature; the writer; the good writer; the duty of the writer. (There is probably no single "right" answer here, although some responses are certainly closer to the facts than others. The important thing is to look closely at the text and be prepared to offer sound reasons for the answer you select!) --It can be said that Faulkner is offering his own definition of "the right kind of poet " and, although he only indirectly suggests the kind of man the good poet must be, he quite explicitly prescribes the kind of thing to which he must turn his entire attention. "The duty of the writer", therefore, is probably as accurate an answer as "the good writer," and even "the writer," if sufficiently qualified, would be a respectable response.

3. You probably feel--and quite properly--that Faulkner's "definition," no matter how you describe it, is very different from all of the other definitions you have read in this section. See if you can explain to your own satisfaction what seems to be the most important difference between Faulkner's speech and the other materials you have read. Then, as an exercise, place a circle around the one statement among the following which, you feel, describes the most distinctive thing about Faulkner's definition:
   a. Faulkner uses much more difficult words than the other writers.
   b. Unlike any of the other writers, Faulkner talks about what is "abstract," about things we cannot touch or see but only feel.
   c. Unlike the other writers, Faulkner is quite as fully concerned about what "ought to be" as with what is the fact.
   d. Unlike the other writers, Faulkner has composed a speech, intended for oral delivery.

e. Unlike the other writers, Faulkner lets us know how he feels about his subject rather than giving an entirely "objective," uncolored account.

--The student should see that here Faulkner professes to be addressing himself to a particular audience and quite openly urging the course which that audience ought to follow. (And, of course, the fact that Faulkner claims to be speaking to young writers does not mean that his words do not have direct meaning for us--as Faulkner must have intended they should!)

4. Do you think it is accurate to say that Faulkner's first paragraph is chiefly about himself? If not, what is it chiefly about?--This is somewhat "open-ended." Faulkner claims to be talking not about himself but his work--and "his work" is the work of any writer. At the same time, in this paragraph, Faulkner takes clear note of this particular occasion, tells what he chooses to do with the occasion, and why.

Intermediate

5. In the second paragraph Faulkner says that "there are no longer problems of the spirit." Why do you suppose that the question, "When will I be blown up" is not a problem of the spirit?--Perhaps the student can see that, for Faulkner, fear (earlier qualified as physical) has nothing to do with the spirit. Perhaps because there is no solution to fear except mastering and forgetting it, because there is no choice, even because fear is not uniquely human but something we have in common with animals, he seems to regard it neither as a problem nor as involving the human heart. All this can probably be simplified, however, by our reflecting that when fear overcomes us, we seem unable to care about anything else.

6. The third paragraph begins, "He must learn them again." To what do the words he and them refer?--Merely a "close reading" question, this item asks that the student recognize how the antecedents of a sentence (the young man or woman and the problems of the human heart) may lie buried in a preceding paragraph but must be understood if the writing is to make sense.

7. In his final paragraph, Faulkner tells us that he "declines to accept the end of man." What does he accept instead?--Faulkner opposes his notion of prevailing to both the end of man and mere endurance. What prevailing means, beyond the fact that is more than enduring, is open to speculation.

8. You should see that, however we define Faulkner's "subject," he proceeds to give us his opinion on several topics. What are these topics--and what is Faulkner's opinion in each case?--Faulkner's final view about the duty of the poet depends upon his previously-expressed convictions upon several topics, most conspicuously, "our tragedy today" (universal physical fear), the effect of this tragedy upon the modern writer, the eternal

(as opposed to ephemeral) qualities of writing, and the future and survival of mankind.

Difficult

9. In this speech, on a notable occasion, Faulkner has chosen to make a statement about "our tragedy today." To whom does our refer? What is this statement doing in the speech--that is, how is it related to the principal things Faulkner is trying to say?--Our is somewhat ambiguous in this context, for Faulkner has previously announced that he is speaking to young writers. Our tragedy, then, might mean the tragedy of all men, or on the other hand, it might mean that we, as writers, share a tragedy which is the result of universal fear.

10. Faulkner was famous--and won the Nobel Prize--for his novels. How do you account for the fact that his final sentence talks about the poet's voice?--Faulkner appears to identify the kind of writer he is with poets. The student should probably be told that poet has a long tradition as applied to more than writers of verse, that Faulkner is here speaking, perhaps, of all imaginative writers, of all writers who properly address themselves to the greatest human problems--as opposed to reporters or advertising men.

11. In your own language, indicate what Faulkner believes about "the young man or woman writing today," pointing out both what is wrong with today's writing and the reasons Faulkner gives to account for this.--The outline given above should supply something like the kind of paraphrase or summary which the superior student may produce. It is hard to say that Faulkner's argument is actually a criticism of contemporary writing, but he is clearly pointing to a state of mind and spirit from which he believes contemporary writers are bound to suffer.

12. Faulkner complains about writers who "leave no scars." What do you suppose, in the light of his general argument, he means by this phrase?--The emphasis upon permanence seems consistent with this figure. Mark may be almost as good as scar, but the latter strongly suggests that the impact of great writing is not "easy-to-take" but as powerful, lasting, honorable, and in the long-run healthy as a wound which ultimately scars over.

13. What do you think Faulkner would say about the following statement?

    > The writer is free to write about anything he chooses. His only duty is to write accurately and eloquently.

    --In comparison with the stern, lofty, and dedicated statement which Faulkner offers concerning the poet's duty, the quotation given in the question is on the one hand highly permissive (free to write about anything he chooses) and on the other, narrow and unimaginative (in its emphasis on mere accuracy and, for what it is worth, "eloquence"). More basically, the student should see the quoted statement is concerned with prescriptions only with respect to how one should write; Faulkner ignores the how in his energetic insistence on what should occupy the writer.

Lit/II/TV/F:Ex

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

FORM

PART TWO: EXAMPLE

Literature Curriculum II

Teacher Version

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Foreword

One method of expanding the topic is by use of the example. In its simplest form, the example is a single word, the appositive. Developed in more detail, it becomes a sentence or two. Sometimes adequate treatment of the example requires a whole paragraph. Occasionally the example is expanded until it becomes the whole work.

All writers employ the example to some extent, but in the selections in this unit, the method has been used exclusively. Most of the selections illustrate the use of several examples to develop an idea. One of them, "Crystal Moment," shows the power of a well developed single example to illuminate a thesis statement. Other selections range from the simplest kind of listing as in "Smells" to more complicated structures in the longer essay.

Although the thread upon which these selections are strung is that of development by example, there are other aspects of form which can be noted during the reading of the poetry. Both the Teacher Version and Student Version contain suggestions for examining free verse, rhyme schemes, the iamb, the couplet, and the quatrain.

Nor does stress on form preclude recognition of subject. The worth of the subject matter was considered in making the choices for this unit and provision was made for appropriate emphasis in the study questions directed to the pupil.

Point of view also receives attention. All but two of the selections are developed in the first person. The exceptions are Sandburg's "Yarns" and "Barter" by Sara Teasdale. In "Barter" use of the second person in the final stanza makes it seem that the author is urging the reader to accept her point of view.

The ordering of the selections proved a simple matter. Two groupings are at once apparent: the light and the more philosophical. Because of the ease with which the Christopher Morley poem can be read and understood, it is a suitable opener. The H. Allen Smith essay, equally light, yet appealing to young people, leads to the last of the first group, Sandburg's catalogue of "Yarns." The second group begins with Whitman's "Miracles," and here the two poets provide the bridge with their similar interest in the commonplace and their use of free verse. It is easy to move from Whitman's wonder at "Miracles" to Coffin's awe at a "Crystal Moment." The use of the example culminates in a poem of unusual beauty and depth by Sara Teasdale.

A special note needs to be added on the subject of poetry. Although it has been said so often that the statement is almost trite, poetry is written to be heard. The first presentation of a poem should be through oral reading by the teacher to the class. Every poem worth the teaching deserves the best oral interpretation the teacher can give it.

At the conclusion of this unit the student should have reached a fair understanding of the possibilities of the example in developing an idea. This understanding should certainly provide a backlog for some extended work in composition in which students are assigned practice in developing ideas by means of example.

I. Christopher Morley, "Smells" (For text of poem see Student Version.)

Although Christopher Morley (1890-1957) may not rank with our greatest American poets, he has surely earned the title of distinguished man of letters. Having completed his undergraduate education at Haverford College, he studied in England as a Rhodes scholar. He then returned to America and began his remarkably active literary career. Besides his journalistic work for *The Ladies' Home Journal* and *The Saturday Review of Literature*, he turned his hand to many other forms of literary production. During his lifetime he was reporter, columnist, editor, poet, novelist, essayist, playwright, and play producer.

Perhaps it was this very versatility which kept him from reaching the heights in any one field. According to *The Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature*, his good friend Henry Seidel Canby had this to say about him:

> A rusher in and out, bubbling with ideas like a soda fountain, a wit, a wagster, an Elizabethan philosopher, with one of the few minds I have known that seemed to be perpetually enjoying his own versatility.

Critics who praised him during his early years did not continue their acclaim during his maturity. Nevertheless, his sense of humor, his wit, his extraordinary feeling for words gave pleasure to many readers during his lifetime. *The Haunted Bookshop*, *Parnassus on Wheels*, *Thunder on the Left*, and *Kitty Foyle* are some of his most widely read books. He helped to establish *The Saturday Review of Literature* (now *The Saturday Review*) and served as the first editor.

Study Questions

Simple

1. Why do you think the poet has given us a list of smells? Is he trying to make us *believe* something, *see or feel*

something, remember something, learn something? At any point in the poem, does he directly tell us his intention?--Although the student will soon move to more elaborate uses of example, in this poem he should see that the poet is really not attempting to prove or demonstrate any particular point. Instead, after implying that poets should write more often about smells, he straightforwardly announces that "these are the odors I love well." It seems proper to say that he is asking us to recall and participate in some experiences of smell rather than attempting to persuade or instruct us.

2. What other words are used for smell? (Find three.)--After the student has identified odors, fragrance, whiffs, and balsam as "substitutes" for smell, he may be encouraged to see that a substitute is not necessarily an exact synonym. None of the four terms say precisely the same thing as smell, although odor is pretty close. Fragrance has an implication of pleasantness (it is harder to think of a bad fragrance than of a bad smell); balsam limits the smells to those with a certain source, and whiffs are brief and interrupted experiences with smell.

Intermediate

3. Is it actually true that "woods breathe sweet"? Would you prefer the poem to say "woods smell sweet"? Why?--The student, it is hoped, will prefer woods breathe to woods smell in this context. The former is an instance of "personification"--although a very mild one--which allows us to see the woods as actively contributing to the poet's pleasure.

4. To fully understand the poem, you should know the words balsam, gramarye, and fumy. If you are not sure of their meanings, look them up.--The aptness of the terms should be stressed quite as much as their meanings. Balsam does fine for Christmas trees; it would be strange if applied to coffee. Gramarye, as simply meaning magic, introduces a new element into the poem; all of the odors arise from concrete and rather common sources, but by this word, the poet attributes magical qualities to them. Fumy (one definition of which actually involves both odor and smoke) is another active term, summoning up the image of the pipe actually giving off its smoke and smell in a way which a gentler word like fragrance does not suggest.

5. The author has developed his subject by mentioning many of the smells he likes. How many are there? Has he grouped them in any way?--While the arrangement of odors is not extremely tight, the student may find a kind

of grouping-by-association. The smells of the first group (second stanza) would probably be encountered in a kitchen. The second group are not as clearly related but they tend to invite more robust, manly associations and perhaps suggest an evening's reading by the fire. The September woods and campfire go together, while the aromatic odors of the final stanza are less common, carry exotic suggestions of foreign places (even balsam is somewhat unusual), and hence make the notion of magic appear less abrupt in this context. And the final line should seem climactic, not only because of its position in the poem or the fact that the "ship smells best of all," but because "ship-smell" is more complex, elusive, and unconventional than are the odors previously described.

Difficult

6. The poem begins with a question. Is this question ever answered? Can you think of any reason for asking a question which you do not intend to answer?--To help the student recognize that the opening question is "rhetorical," he may be asked to turn it into a declarative statement--something to the effect that "Poets tell very little about the sense of smell." When this is done, the function of the question becomes more apparent and the first stanza may be seen as implicitly saying, "Poets don't often write about smells, but here is one poet who is about to do so. These are the odors I love well."

7. What purpose does the last line in the poem serve? Would the poem be complete without it? Why or why not? How does it affect the pattern of the poem?--The structural relationship of the last line to its context has already been considered in Question 5. The more perceptive students may wonder about the effect of this line on the total poem and on the reader. Is the poem, when all is said and done, primarily in praise of ship-smell rather than of smells in general? Or has the poet merely concluded his list of examples with the one which is dearest to him? These are questions without a single "right" answer, but they may suggest to the student how a single line in a poem may shape and alter all the lines which have preceded it.

II. H. Allen Smith, "Coping with the Compliment" (For text, see Student Version.)

H. Allen Smith's formal education ended early. After completing the eighth grade, he worked at a variety of jobs: chicken picker, shoeshine boy, sweeper in a barber shop. Later he became a newspaper man, working on several papers before he wound up with the United Press. After some unsuccessful attempts at writing, he wrote Low Man on a Totem Pole, the first of a long series of best sellers.

Study Questions

Simple

1. Although this is an essay about familiar things, the author uses a number of somewhat unusual words. Among them are inept, ethereal, retort, cadence, sestet, execrable, adroit, paradoxes, inarticulate, smirk, comport, geophysicist, congeries, bridle, enhance, and derogation. For how many of these words can you supply a meaning without consulting the dictionary? (It is often possible to make an "intelligent guess" by considering the position and use of the word in the sentence in which it appears.) Consult your dictionary after you have done your best without it. Could the author have used simpler words to convey much the same meaning: If so, why did he choose more complicated and unusual ones?--Here is a chance for the student to see that "hard words" are not necessarily the sign of solemn, technical, or high-brow thoughts but that they can often be used for such effects as humor. Smith's rather trivial subject is made amusing, among other ways, by the use of language that is sober and slightly exaggerated, often more appropriate to systematic, serious discourse than to the trifling form of social embarrassment which is under discussion. The student should see the exaggeration in phrases like "we grow inarticulate and our kneecaps begin to vibrate" and in such overblown terms as "furrowed brow" or "execrable". He may see,too, that the talk of "denial and derogation," of "techniques," of "special problems" and "being exposed to this situation" are ways in which the author pretends to be dealing systematically, even scientifically, with a rather amusing problem which actually warrants no such approach.

2. Do you agree that "coping with a compliment" is a real problem? Do you think it is as serious as the author seems to? Is it possible that he is pretending that it is more serious than he actually believes?--In answering this open-ended question, the student may feel that Smith considers coping with compliments to be a rather serious problem. But the distortions and exaggerations may suggest that Smith has deliberately blown up his experiences for humorous purposes. The student may wish to compare Smith's response to compliments with his own, producing examples to show that compliments are not really as troublesome (or perhaps as humorous) as Smith pretends they are.

Intermediate

3. As we have said, H. Allen Smith has a reputation as a humorist. Is this largely a humorous essay? What are the funniest things about it?-- The student will probably discover that much of the essay's humor lies in the examples which Smith produces--several of which are little comic anecdotes in their own right. In many of them there is the common factor of embarrassment or mild frustration and the student can be led to recognize that experiences of this kind are the basis of many comic situations. The lack of control--of the poise of which the essay speaks--is, particularly in social situations where poise is most required, the kind of comic element which is regarded as fundamental by many writers on comic theory.

4. However humorous you find the essay, do you think the author is trying to make any serious point? If so, state the point in your own words. --It is probably true that Smith really doesn't like compliments and that, however amusingly he may distort his experiences with them, he thinks that social life would be better without them. He appears to be serious when he explains the compliment as "just making conversation." Hence, however humorous the essay may be, a student may feel that he will remembe it the next time he is tempted to pay a hollow compliment.

5. The essay is, in large part, a series of little stories or examples. What general point is made by all of them? What further, particular points do they illustrate? That is, what particular point is made by the story of the lady who says, "This old rag?" By the little girl who shows off her dress, petticoat, and underpants? By the host, in the final story which the author borrows from Eliza W. Farrar?--Although each illustrative specimen in the essay considers a way of "coping with compliments," the student will not understand the more detailed structure unless he sees that each example serves a more particular purpose. There are, that is, a series of "sub-points," invariably begun by a general statement and then illustrated by a particular enecdote or example. Thus the lady who says "This old rag" exemplifies the difficulties of "denial and derogation," the little girl illustrates an attractive (but humorously improper) response for adults, and the New England host is the perfect specimen of "poise."

Difficult

6. The essay is written in the first-person--that is, by an "I" who tells us about his own thoughts and experiences. Could many of the same things be said in a third-person essay, in which no "I" appears? What advantages, if any,

do you think have been gained by the use of the first-person? --We should not over-generalize about the "closeness" or "realism" which use of the first-person can achieve, but in this essay it seems safe to say that the first-person adds directness as the author invites the reader to share in his feelings and experiences. To the extent that the essay offers examples in support of a semi-serious proposition, the author is providing us with first-person evidence. To the extent, on the other hand, that the essay is largely comic, it follows the pattern of many comedians (including a number of television performers) who offer themselves as victims or "dupes" and deliberately exaggerate their own awkwardness or embarrassment in order to make us laugh.

7. The author concludes by telling us that the eight little letters of "thank you" are the only sensible response to a compliment. He does not directly tell us why this is so, but, on the basis of the examples he has given, why do you think "thank you" is the best answer to a compliment? --Each of the examples which precede the final paragraph purports to show a way of coping with compliments, and each is rejected for one reason or another. "Thank you" is about the only alternative left. It isn't very original, but it's safe and honest. And it is perfectly appropriate as a response to those who are only "making conversation" anyhow!

III. Carl Sandburg, "Yarns" (Excerpt from "The People, Yes") For text, see Student Version.)

Born in Illinois, the son of poor Swedish immigrants, Carl Sandburg went to work at thirteen and struck out on his own at seventeen. After service in the Spanish-American War he was encouraged to go to college. Eventually he began writing for newspapers, achieving particular recognition in this field in Chicago about the time of World War I.

In his youth in Illinois he absorbed the Lincoln legend until it became one of the two great passions of his life. For years he collected and studied material on Lincoln and finally produced the definitive biography of the great American. The other passion of his life is poetry. His years as a laborer left him with an abiding love for the common man, the Middle Western worker in city or town or on the prairie. In his poetry he revels in every detail of the lives of these people. Americans have come to realize that he speaks for the common man everywhere in the land. As Henry Steele Commager once wrote, "He celebrates what is best in us, and recalls us to our heritage and our humanity" (Kunitz, Twentieth Century Authors, First Supplement, p. 863.) No man to stay out of the main stream of life, he has lived the role of American poet: people all over the United States have heard the sturdy old man in the blue serge suit, white hair falling in his eyes, sing folk-ballads and recite his poetry.

Study Questions

Simple

1. Each of the little stories Sandburg tells is what he calls a yarn. By thinking about what all of these examples have in common, can you define the kind of story which Sandburg thinks of as a yarn?--Students should be able to understand that Sandburg's "yarns" are what are more often called "tall tales." They exaggerate--and more! Most of them are amusingly outrageous, gloriously impossible lies. Some of their appeal lies in a "straight-faced" mode of narration, a brisk, matter-of-fact style which makes no attempt to stress or apologize for their manifest incredibility.

2. The larger poem, of which "yarns" is a part, tries, among other things, to let the reader know what the American people are like. In what ways do you think "yarns" helps to accomplish this? What do you think it tells us about the American people?--People who tell yarns of this sort are probably humorous and imaginative. The students may be encouraged to think of other kinds of folk tales, very different from these, which would imply that their tellers were devout or superstitious or warlike or impoverished. These "yarns," in contrast, seem to be produced by people who can relax and look humorously upon their own society and, perhaps, on that society's striving toward the superlative in many areas.

Intermediate

3. There are almost thirty "yarns" in this selection. Do you think Sandburg could have shortened his list and still "made his point"? Would you have advised him to do so?--Perhaps discussion might begin with the statement "they have yarns." The student should soon recognize that it is an under-statement; the examples roll on and on, so extravagant, numerous, and richly diversified that, one might say, the final line might appropriately read, "They certainly do have yarns." A few yarns, more or less, would probably make little difference in the total effect, but the student should see their large number as an important means by which Sandburg can indicate how abundant and colorful are these products of the imagination. And, of course, each yarn is sufficiently amusing so that, without worrying about its ultimate purpose, we are tempted to feel "the more, the merrier."

4. Although Sandburg writes in the third person (there is no "I" in these lines), is there anything about the poem which shows how he feels about the tales he tells us?--Sandburg, of course, does not directly express his attitude toward these yarns. He does not embellish them or urge that they either be believed or doubted--and this is part of their "straight-faced" appeal. But his relish in piling up examples in one prepositional phrase after another suggests that he is not anxious to drop the subject, that he feels a delight in them he wishes us to share.

Difficult

5. Can you say anything about the kind of subjects on which the yarns are generally based? Would it have been appropriate to include a yarn about a ghost? A movie star? A great ballplayer? A wonderfully fast horse? A mad scientist? A rocket to the moon?--The subjects or "materials" of the yarns are largely familiar in American life. The miraculous, supernatural, exotic, and "glamorous" play little part. Thus the subjects of ghost stories or science fiction, of remote and glamorized human activities, play no part in the kind of folk-culture here reflected. The "tall tale" formula is imposed upon common interests and experiences of ordinary people (baseball or horse racing would be among them) so that delightful fantasy is constructed out of the materials of everyday reality.

IV. Walt Whitman, "Miracles" (For text, see Student Version)

Whitman's early life was one of poverty and struggle, conditions which forced him to leave school at eleven and go to work. He gravitated to writing for newspapers, taught for a few years, then returned to newspaper work. Sometime during these years he had started writing short stories and verse, all of it wretched stuff according to the critics. It was not until his late twenties that Whitman began to write a new form of poetry, and seven years went by before any of it was published. Then in 1855, as Louis Untermeyer recounts in The Golden Treasury of Poetry, "when Walt Whitman was thirty-six, an unknown journalist who could not find a publisher, he printed by hand a little volume called Leaves of Grass. The book was a bombshell. It roused its readers to violent extremes. It was attacked for its form and its frankness, and it was praised for its liberating spirit, for what Emerson called its 'free and brave thought.' Each new edition of Leaves of Grass contained additional poems; a complete collection printed in Whitman's seventy-third year disclosed that the original twelve poems had grown to nearly four hundred. In their subject matter, their language and their construction, the poems were unlike anything that had hitherto been written. What started as an experiment in American poetry became a great fulfillment with a world-wide influence.

The influence on form is most obvious. What he wanted to say could only be expressed in the flexible and loosely rhythmical lines now known as free verse. More important still was his recognition of the 'glory of the commonplace,' his insistence that nothing is insignificant" (The Golden Treasury of Poetry, p. 246).

Study Questions

Simple

1. Can you quote the lines in which the poet states the chief subject of his poem? Re-state the subject in a sentence which begins with "Whitman believes that. . ."--The statement, repeated in various ways at various points, that seems to dominate the poem is, "I know of nothing else than miracles." A student might put it simply that Whitman believes that everything is a miracle. It becomes clear as the poem develops, moreover, that Whitman is not merely listing simply experiences which are dear to him but celebrating the miraculous character of the whole of creation.

2. Whitman has made groupings of examples of miracles. Look closely at the poem. Can you divide the miracles into groups of any kind?--Rigid classification of the "miracles" is not necessary, but the student should find form in the poem by considering the classes of examples which the poet introduces. At the beginning, there are personal experiences--observing, wading, standing, sitting, looking. "Watching," too, seems to be one of these, yet at this point vision expands and, from immediate, particular spectacles, we move out to contemplate sundown, stars, and moon. From this are developed even more general--indeed universal--miracles, embracing all of time and space. And, it may be said, the final miracles involve the sea both as the source of particular miracles (fishes, rocks, waves, ships, and their crews) and as a symbol of the eternal.

Intermediate

3. Which poem we have read recently has a form similar to this? What do we call this type of verse? Does it seem appropriate for Whitman's purposes?--Perhaps the student can be induced to think particularly about the "freedom" which free verse allows. In both of the free-form poems he has read, nothing limits the number or length or diversity of the poet's examples. Although lyric poetry so often has its form determined, in

part at least, by considerations of meter, rhyme, and uniform stanzas, here are poems whose form is governed entirely by the poet's subject and his intention and thus, as in a prose argument, the number and size of the examples offered is determined entirely by the use to which they are put.

4. Most of us would agree that Whitman's "miracles" are generally found in simple and familiar things. Does he ever try, particularly in his use of words, to show what is uncommon or "miraculous" about these things? Can you find instances in which his language seems to be attempting this?--Whitman seems often to be content to let his "miracles" speak for themselves. At other points, however, he strives, through his language, to convey the feeling of the miraculous. This is notable in the cases of wonderfulness, quiet, bright, and exquisite. And the better students may point out that emphasis upon words like every and continual remind us that infinity and eternity are the greatest miracles of all.

5. A famous poem by Whitman is called "Song of Myself." "Miracles," too, is a kind of "song of myself," for it certainly tells us something about the poet. On the basis of this poem, what sort of man do you think the poet is?--If the poem is seen as a statement of belief, then Whitman can be said to characterize himself as the kind of man for whom everything is a miracle, who can appreciate the whole of experience, savoring each moment as novel and magical. Such a man, when speaking directly of himself, will reveal his capacity for simple pleasures--wading, standing under trees, eating with friends, and observing all that nature has to offer.

Difficult

6. The poem ends with a question. Could you say pretty much the same thing as Whitman does in a declarative sentence (by stating it as a fact, rather than a question)? What effect does the question have on you?--As a direct statement (something like "There are no stranger miracles than these") the line might preserve its chief effect by characterizing the preceding examples as strange. But as a question, the line invites the reader to reconsider the preceding examples, perhaps to alter his previous conception of miracles, and to join the poet in discovering the miraculous in all of life.

V. Robert P. Tristram Coffin, "The Crystal Moment" (For text, see Student Version.)

Robert P. Tristram Coffin was a New Englander who wrote biography, essays, novels, and poetry. Writing and teaching poetry, however, were his chief concerns. Critic John Holmes feels that Coffin's poetry is "full of tang and muscular exertion, of pride in life and joy in mankind" (Herzberg, Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature, p. 189). His own definitions of poetry perhaps explain him best. "Among my definitions of poetry are these: Poetry is the art of making people feel well about life; poetry is saying the best one can about life; poetry is the art of putting different kinds of good things together: men and plows, boys and whistles, hounds and deer, sorrow and sympathy, life and death" (Kunitz and Haycraft, Twentieth Century Authors, p. 395).

In addition to maintaining a steady output of writing, Coffin found time to manage two farms, make drawings for his books, and record fifty of his poems for the Library of Congress.

Study Questions

Simple

1. Although this poem describes a single experience and thus offers only one example, this example--like others you have studied--provides a particular illustration of a general statement. Can you locate the general statement in the poem? Is the statement entirely clear--or can you think of ways it might be re-worded or expanded?--The poem purports to offer an example of the things that "can make one hold his breath." The student may recognize that, although we talk casually of "holding one's breath," to be actually forced to do so by a spectacle of some kind is actually a very uncommon experience. The more imaginative student may attach significance to the phrase "this side of death" and suggest that the moment which is described partakes somehow of the nature of death itself. The teacher may find it useful to ask whether the same effect would have been achieved by the phrase "once or twice in a lifetime."

2. Would the poem be more satisfactory if more than one example were given? When do you think one example can be as effective--or more so--than several?--The rarity of this kind of experience is one of its most important aspects. One example is thus not only adequate but completely suitable, for it is likely that additional examples would weaken the special "crystalline" quality of the moment.

Intermediate

3. What use has the author made of comparisons? Can you locate instances both of direct, explicit, comparisons and of implicit comparisons (those in which the author

does not use the word like but assumes that we can see how one thing resembles another)?--In addition to the explicit similes (like a tree, like a fierce caress, like a leaf, like a knife) the poem depends on less directly expressed figures. It offers images which are unusual (sounds of church bells in the throats of hounds) or elliptical (forest's holiness) or mixtures of the abstract and concrete (need above him like a knife). And the two final stanzas depend almost exclusively on figurative language--the pageant which is suited only for divine eyes and the extraordinary figure of life and death, hitched in tendem and moving in a kind of glorious balance.

4. How much can you say about the "technical" poetic qualities of the poem? The rhyme-scheme? The stanzas? The length of lines? The dominant meter? Do you think the author's choices in these respects lead to particular effects?--The technical aspects of the poem tend to be simple: a single tetrameter couplet forms each stanza and the iambic feet are relatively regular. The couplet may be said to suggest the dual emphasis of the content--stag and hounds, pursued and pursuer, fear and hunger, life and death. Simplicity of this kind is appropriate in the description of a single "crystal moment," but the student should also recognize that neither the moment nor the poem is as simple as it seems.

5. What meaning do you attach to the word crystal in the title? Would a more satisfactory title be Unforgettable Moment or Magic Moment?--The student may speculate about the qualities of a crystal which are applicable to the poet's moment. Of these, clarity and, perhaps, permanence, are the most obvious, but it may be pointed out that a crystal is many-faceted and that the moment, for all its clarity, is a somewhat complex one.

Difficult

6. Coffin has attempted to describe a very "special" experience for us. What, in your own words, seems to account for its "special" quality? Can you think of experiences--perhaps of a very different kind--that have had similar importance for you?--It is probably unwise to push the student too energetically toward recognizing the unusual and mysterious nature of the vision which the poet so cherishes. The adult can doubtless sympathize with Coffin's ability to find rare beauty in a moment of intense terror and flight, hunger and pursuit, and precarious but magnificent balance between life and death. However much of this has meaning for the student, he should be able to see that the poet has begun with an unusual but perfectly "real" spectacle in purely natural surroundings and has

found in it something more than raw terror or raw pity.

7. Is the author asking us to feel sorry for the buck? Do you think the poem is an argument against hunting? --It is hard to see this poem as an "argument." The fear of the stag and the desperate hunger of the dogs contribute almost equally to the poet's response. And it is clear that, for all its fear and fierceness, the spectacle is one of strange beauty for the poet.

8. Compare this poem with Whitman's "Miracles." Which poem seems more concerned with stating the poet's beliefs? Do you think Whitman would react as Coffin has to this particular "crystal moment"? Do you think Coffin would agree with Whitman's definition of "miracles"? (Of course, we can only guess about these questions, for we can know for certain only what each poem tells us. But it is possible to talk about the attitudes toward common matters which the two poems seem to express.)

VI. Sara Teasdale, "Barter" (For text, see Student Version.)

Born in St. Louis, the only child of very old parents, Sara Teasdale struggled during much of the earlier part of her life to become an independent person capable of making her own decisions. This goal she never fully achieved, and her poetry reflects her own inner conflicts. Early in life she was inspired by the lyric poet Christina Rossetti, and sought to emulate her accomplishments. But she did not quite achieve the heights attained by Rossetti.

The particular selection presented for study here mirrors her love of life and her strong urge to give herself completely to living. The events of her own life, however, do not show the complete commitment which she advocates. As time went on, she became more and more withdrawn, even to the point of becoming a recluse. She had a deep awareness of what happiness could mean, but was unable to reach out and take it for herself.

Study Questions

Simple

1. What does the title mean? What is the dictionary definition of the word? How does it fit into the use of sell and buy in other parts of the poem? --The concept of exchange or trade implied by barter appears in the movement from what life has to offer to the recognition that these offerings require "payment"--although a payment for which infinite value is received. The poem can

be seen as a gracious argument, urging us to engage in a barter in which, whatever the price we pay, the loveliness we receive will be a "bargain."

2. What are the things--we call them images in poetry--which the author associates with the loveliness life has to offer? Make a list of these images. Line eleven speaks of the "spirit's still delight." What, besides man's spirit, is delighted by loveliness?--The grouping of images is a major source of poetic form. The majority of the images are sensory, the first stanza including only those which appeal to vision and the second stanza moving through images of sound, scent, and even touch to the "higher" appeal of the holy thoughts which delight the spirit. But, although loveliness is exemplified to such a great extent by objects of sense perception, the satisfaction they afford is not purely physical. The motion of fire, the children's wondering faces, music, loving eyes and arms hold loveliness only for the sensitive beholder.

Intermediate

3. What lines of the poem most completely state the point of view of the author? Can you state this attitude in a sentence of your own?--The student should find in this poem a genuine development, an "argument" which is not completed until the final stanza makes clear the two-sided character of the "Barter" which is being described. Thus the statement that "Life has loveliness to sell" is an incomplete summary of the author's point of view, for the urgent command to "spend all you have for loveliness" is a climax toward which the preceding lines have been preparation. Whether the poem's final line is an even more satsifactory statement of the author's basic attitude is a matter for open discussion; ecstasy, even more than peace, is presumably the ultimate form which loveliness can take.

4. At what point does the author cease making statements about the loveliness of life and begin to urge the reader to buy? What change comes over the structure of the sentences here, making them different from those which precede them?--The development of the poem is reflected, among other ways, by the change in the form of the sentences, beginning with the third stanza. Each of the two preceding stanzas begins with the same general statement, followed by a series of examples in apposition to the word loveliness. The final stanza contains four, essentially dependent, imperative clauses. The student may be helped to understand this structure by the suggestion that the final stanza is linked with the other two by a silent

therefore, since the urgings of the last six lines are based on the statements and examples which have been provided earlier.

Difficult

5. What does the author recommend as a fair price for loveliness? What is the price she would give for ecstasy? Does this conception of purpose fit into the meaning of the title?--The definition of the price to be paid for loveliness is one of those general, even vague, poetic statements whose power lies not in what is explicitly said but in what we are invited to infer and imagine. The poet tells us to spend "all we have"; the more particular aspects of this "purchase" take largely temporal form (years go for one hour of peace, and a single "breath" of ecstasy is worth the entire past and the entire future). The word barter has been made, by this point, to appear inadequate, probably deliberately. For we are not merely being urged to "buy" but to understand that our moments of loveliness, of peace, of ecstasy are what make life, whatever its hardships, a precious possession.

6. Is the word ecstasy new to you? If it is, have you some idea of its meaning from its use here? Check your guess with the dictionary to be sure. --Since ecstasy is the climactic term in the poem's final stanza, it offers the student a good opportunity to consider the power of a single word within a poetic context. He ought to note its intensity as well as its subjective or "personalized" connotations, particularly in contrast with the more serene and objective concepts of loveliness and peace.

7. Like the poems by Whitman and Coffin, Miss Teasdale's verses deal with moments or aspects or experience in life which she finds particularly satisfying. We might say that she, too, is interested in the "miracles" which life offers to those who can appreciate them. In what ways does her point of view resemble those of the other two poets? In what ways is it different?--Once again, as in the poems by Whitman and Coffin, the poet invites us to share in what he regards as the deepest satsifactions human experience can afford. The student may recognize that all three of the poems offer examples of powerfully affecting and meaningful experiences which have in common the fact that they are based in the natural world, tend to be simple rather than extravagant and complicated, and--even in the case of Coffin's moment--are represented as accessible to the ordinary sensitive and observant person. But the student should also see that the examples are offered in support of very different opinions and attitudes. For Whitman, the "miracles" are with us always and everywhere; for Coffin, they occur very rarely and possess

unique power; for Miss Teasdale, who occupies a kind of "middle ground," experiences of extreme loveliness are probably rather rare and brief yet are provided by the familiar phenomena of nature and of human love and thought. Thus, in terms of the general concepts employed in the curriculum, it may be said that the form of all three poems can be described, at least partially, by saying that general propositions are supported by specific examples. It may be likewise pointed out that, with respect to subject, all three poems are concerned with the most meaningful and moving aspects of human experience and where they can be found in the lives of ordinary men. It is in their point of view that the three poets differ most sharply, and these differences account for corresponding differences in the details of form and subject as well, of course, as in the peculiar effect which each of the poems achieves upon the reader.

Lit/II/TV/F:C/C

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

FORM

PART THREE: COMPARISON/CONTRAST

Literature Curriculum II

Teacher Version

Comparison/Contrast

INTRODUCTION

One of the most effective means of organizing in non-storied literature is that of comparison/contrast. This unit, therefore, contains several parts: first, a general introduction, so that students can see the process as something they continually engage in; second, a series of works with study questions, organized around different subjects, types, and techniques; third, a series of suggested activities for both oral and written work. Explications and questions accompany the works themselves, with activities and a brief bibliography at the end.

What students should first see is that comparison/contrast is a normal process they have been using all their lives. Trying to show how strong a football hero is, one might call him strong as an ox; another, attempting to communicate certain qualities of mean old Miss Grundy in the fifth grade, might regard her as sour as a lemon. Thus the teacher can point out that writers use this normal human process, too. The class can read Emily Dickinson's "I like to see it lap the miles" to see how she has expanded upon the simple notion of railroad train=dragon to show a number of points of similarity. In reading this poem, too, students could begin to see that writers are often subtle; she never explicitly states what the comparison is, but we know by the shared images. Likewise, students should see contrast as another way of judging the world around them. "No, Charlie Brown is not as smart as Schroeder Van Pelt," one might say. "He can't play the piano."

They then might be led to see that this way of thinking and communicating is tied to other devices studied in this part of the curriculum. A good contrast, for example, helps to define things ("What is a giraffe?" "Well, it has four legs like a horse, but its neck is nothing like a horse's neck: it's much longer.") Examples are necessary, likewise, for comparison/contrast: the Creole courtyard is different from the street outside because of a number of specific things. Images set one against another help us see kinds of relationships.

Throughout, students must begin to see that a good comparison/contrast, like any good piece of writing, is not a random thing. The first principle requires precision (whether in writing or reading): determining a common basis between two things. They might see that statements like "Susie is a red-head, but Mary has four cocker spaniels" compare nothing. Thus they might clear away some of the cobwebs of their own writing and perceive more precisely the central purposes and unity of the material they read. Thus they can see on what grounds Duke Sr.'s men prefer the country, and Browning's speaker the city. Such consideration can lead, then, to a better-refined statement of theme.

In the selections included here, this device is seen as governing and governed by Subject, Form, and Point of View. In the first, the "Creole Courtyard," two places are set against each other in a series of alternating sentences; enforcing this pattern are the concrete details and sounds. The second, "Blow, blow, thou winter wind," the point of view toward city-vs.-country, or the natural-vs.-the artificial, governs the contrast, which takes the form of direct statement, image, and stanza pattern. Here, since the choice is not quite such a simple either-or choice as in the first, the contrast is somewhat more subtle. In the third, DeQuincey's essay comparing King David with Joan of Arc, the subjects are first compared, then contrasted. Here both point of view and structural technique differ from previous modes covered--definite sets of parallels and epithets make clear DeQuincey's attitude toward his subject. The final example and the longest, "Up at a Villa, Down in the City," is thus a culmination of the unit. Here the point of view is more complex, and the first-person narrator will require some attention. Here, too, although the form--alternating stanzas--rather neatly sets up both sides of the ledger, Browning has used other devices--links by rhyme, for example--to point up differences.

To go beyond these four, students might try Sidney's "Leave Me, O Love," Blake's "The Clod and the Pebble," Hopkins' "Pied Beauty," or Byron's "We'll Go No More A-Roving." (The last two are in Immortal Poems, pp. 458 and 291, respectively. The other two are easily available in other collections.) Finally, it should be pointed out that this principle can be used to understand storied literature, too: scenes of stories (Red Badge) can contrast markedly; characters (Don Quixote and Sancho Panza) are consciously set one against the other; conflicts are based upon contrasting goals; patterns of action can contrast in number and kind.

I. "A Creole Courtyard" by Lafcadio Hearn. See Student Version.

Comment on Questions

SIMPLE

1. What senses do these details appeal to?

"the fountains murmured faintly"
"the odor of the rich West India tobacco"
"their flower eyes of flaming scarlet"
"gnarled arms trembled under the weight of honeyed fruit"
"streetcars vulgarly jingle their bells"

The specimens given refer, of course, to senses of sound, odor, sight (2) and, again, sound, but a student who felt that in the "trembling arms" of the fig tree lies some appeal to a sense of actual physical strain would certainly not be wrong.

2. Is there any difference in the sound of these phrases: "the cooing of amorous doves" and "Without, roared the Iron Age,

the angry waves of American traffic"? --A study of the two sentences, in their richness, can be very rewarding. The student will discover that two images, to begin with, have something in common, since they both have to do with sound--and moreover, a repeated or constant sound. This similarity makes all the more striking the contrast between cooing and roaring. A further contrast should be noted between the sources of the sound--between a gentle, natural creature and the strident, man-made traffic of the Iron Age. And a final, "emotional" contrast is established by the use of the two distinctive adjectives, amorous and angry.

3. Describe in a sentence of your own, the chief difference between the inside of the house and the world outside it. --A "perfect" summary sentence is impossible to prescribe, but the thoughtful student should note that the courtyard owes much of its tranquillity and happiness to natural beauty and old-fashioned, unchanging ways, while the "outside world" is not only noisy, harsh, and joyless, but "modern" in a less attractive sense of the word.

INTERMEDIATE

4. Which--inside or outside--does the writer like best? How do you know? --The writer's preference is obvious, but the student should observe the particular terms--sweet, delicious, good, graceful, rich, etc. --by which Hearn's personal response to the courtyard is made clear. The final sentence, a highly personal exclamation, may need to be explained. Canal Street is the boundary of New Orleans' French Quarter--in which the courtyard is located--and it is clear that Hearn, for one, does not wonder why inhabitants of that neighborhood do not care ever to leave it.

5. What effect does he gain from repeating "Without . . . Within" at the first of the sentences? --It should be recognized that the "without . . . within" formula not only makes clear the basic contrast of the essay but also contributes to its form. Hearn might have provided an extended description of the outside world and followed it with a similarly detailed account of the courtyard (or, of course, reversed this order). Instead, three separate aspects of the outside and inside are compared, the description moving alternately from one to the other. And this direct juxtaposition of shorter passages serves to heighten the contrast.

6. How do the details of traffic and trucks fit in with the author's statement in the first sentence? Why doesn't he mention buildings or people or conversation as found in the "outside world"? --In his selection of traffic and trucks, Hearn has seized upon those aspects of the "world without" which contrast most sharply with tranquillity and quiet happiness. Sound, and what it connotes, forms a central basis for the contrast between the two worlds, and, for this purpose, traffic and trucks are perfectly suited, as symbols of modern, man-made noise, to contrast with the gentle serenity of the courtyard.

DIFFICULT

7. If this is a "Paradise," why does Hearn allow the "barbaric sentinels," the "smothering vines," and the "peering plants"?--The more perceptive student will probably sense that much of the appeal which the courtyard has for Hearn lies in its "unspoiled," entirely natural charm. The personification of the plants (of which all three phrases are instances) does much to suggest the totally unchecked, entirely natural profusion of life in a "Paradise" where all forms--including some which are somewhat fierce--flourish. Other responses to this question should certainly be encouraged--including that of the student who may find that these deft touches of savagery prevent the picture of the courtyard from becoming excessively gentle and placid to the point of dullness.

8. The essay begins with a general statement about the "tranquillity and quiet happiness" of the old house. In the description of particular details of the courtyard which follows, the author uses many particular words and phrases to convey the impression of tranquillity and quiet happiness. How many such words and phrases can you discover? Notice, in particular, the details of language which help to suggest happiness.

II. "Blow, blow, thou winter wind" by William Shakespeare. See Student Version.

This lyric, occurring at the end of Act II of Shakespeare's As You Like It, is sung by a group of Duke Senior's men who explain why they have left the cruel court for the ideal green world in the Forest of Arden. Their argument is a conditional one, personifying forces in both city and country as destructive--stinging, warping, with a keen, biting tooth and rude breath. However, the choice is clear: though cold, the winter wind is not so unkind as man (to advanced classes, the paradox of the wind being more kind than other men kin might be mentioned), nor does the bitter sky freeze and bite so sharply as a man forgetting his obligations to other men. Students might see that the rhyme scheme enforces the contrast, with the description of destructive powers in alternating patterns (aabccb) and the refrain , the lines in praise of the green world, ending in the same sounds--holly, folly, and jolly.

Comment on Questions

SIMPLE

1. For a contrast to be effective, there has to be some similarity between the two things contrasted in order to form a "basis for comparison." That is, we can compare a slow runner with a fast one because both are runners, a red house with a white one because both are painted houses, a trip to Yellowstone with one to Disneyland because both are vacation or holiday excursions.

In this song, the Duke's men, having fled the Court and come to the forest, seem to be comparing two ways of life. Circle the one sentence which seems to you to describe most satisfactorily the two ways of life being compared:

A - City life is being compared with country life.
B - The old life at court is being compared with the new life in the Forest.
C - Life in winter is being compared with life in summer.
D - Life on earth is being compared with life after death.
E - Married life is being compared with bachelor life.

Questions One and Two have been presented in "multiple choice" fashion to assist the student in discriminating quite clearly between the basic contrast involved in the song and alternatives which a careless or fragmentary reading might suggest. It seems evident that "this life" is being contrasted to a life which the singers have previously experienced and which, within the context of Shakespeare's play, can only be that which they have led at court.

2. The two lives are being compared on a particular basis, with respect, that is, to a particular thing they have in common, though in different ways. Circle the sentence which most accurately describes the common ground or basis for this comparison.

A - The pleasures of the two lives are being compared.
B - The hardships of the two lives are being compared.
C - The climates in which the two lives are conducted are being compared.
D - The relationships with women in the two lives are being compared.
E - The lengths of the two lives are being compared.

The student should be led to see that, although the singers conclude that "this life is most jolly," the conclusion is reached, not by comparing the positive delights of the present with the lesser delights or hardships of the past but by reflecting that present hardships are less painful than the bitter disappointments of life at court.

3. Does the contrast lead to any conclusion? Is one life preferred to the other? If so, which one--and why?--When the grounds for comparison are made clear, the singers declare their satisfaction with life in the forest, whatever its hardships, because of the absence of the far greater evils they have previously encountered.

INTERMEDIATE

4. The winter wind has a tooth and a "rude breath"; it is called "thou." What sort of figure do these characteristics

combine to create? Can you find another similar figure in the poem?--The student, who has already learned something about "personification," should recognize this device in the characterization of the wind as a semi-human enemy, far less offensive and painful, however, than the genuine human enemies of the court. The "bitter" sky is similarly personified. In words like tooth, breath, bite, warp, and sting the student should discover figurative language which converts the elements into actively hostile agents which can thus be more readily compared to the human agents of cruelty at court.

5. Look at the rhyming words at the end of each line. Do they seem to form a pattern? Does this pattern enforce any set of contrasts in the poem?--The student should not only note the rhyme-scheme of the two stanzas but should recognize the repeated refrain (and its appropriateness to an informal song) as the section of each stanza which, following the contrast of the preceding lines, rejoices in the present situation.

DIFFICULT

6. At one point in each stanza, the singers are led by the comparison they are making to a very broad and somewhat shocking general conclusion. Can you find this statement? Does it seem sensible to you? Do you think Shakespeare wants us to take it seriously? Can you think of any reason, if he does not, why he should have included this statement?--In both stanzas occurs the line "Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly," a sentiment which, the more thoughtful student may find, is intrinsically pretty bitter. If taken in dead seriousness, indeed, the line would suggest that the singers are the gloomiest of men. But the obvious high spirits of the refrain strongly suggest that we must not take the line too literally, that it is the extravagant, somewhat irresponsible sentiment of men who are vigorously damning the old life in their obvious satisfaction with the new. Here, if not earlier, the student should be reminded that the context of the song is a romantic comedy in which very little, from the lines of a song to the entire plot, should be taken too soberly or literally.

III. DeQuincey's "Joan and David". See Student Version.

In this passage, part of an essay in which he defended Joan of Arc against Michelet (a French historian who had set about to debunk the national heroine), DeQuincey compares and contrasts the two heroes, both of whom rose to glory from inglorious beginnings. The first precise point of comparison is thus the pastoral origin of the two; the same parallel is carried through to the culmination in the act which inaugurated their patriotic-religious mission.

Comment on Questions

SIMPLE

1. In what ways did the lives of Joan and David resemble each other? From your own knowledge of Joan and David, describe further the parts of their lives that DeQuincey merely mentions. --The student should see that each of the statements made in the first paragraph applies equally well to both Joan and David, that the origins, the inspiration, the "victorious act," and the assessments of both friends and enemies provide the similarity from which the subsequent contrast proceeds. DeQuincey, it should be noted, assumes that his readers are familiar enough with the stories of both Joan and David so that the precise nature of the "act," the identity of friends and adversaries, and almost all other historical particulars are not specified. The teacher might make this passage the occasion to point out the allusiveness of much literature, for here the author presupposes previous knowledge on the part of his readers. With some questioning--and perhaps reminding--the students can be encouraged to see that they are familiar with the two stories and have actually supplied the "facts," to which DeQuincey only generally refers, from their own store of information.

2. What is the chief point of contrast between the two lives? --The contrast between the two lives is attributed to "enemies," but the student ought to develop this statement further and recognize that the "difference" is between a hero who enjoyed to the full the rewards of victory and one to whom they were totally denied.

3. Each of the following phrases is a figurative way of stating the same fact about Joan: "drank not from the cup of rest," "the departing step of invaders," "mingled not in the festal dances," "her voice was then silent; her feet were dust." Can you state this fact directly in one sentence? Why has DeQuincey stated it as he has? --This difference--alluded to in the preceding question--is stated in each of the figures in question. The martyred Joan did not live to "revel in the vision of coronets and honor from man," in direct contrast to David, who "rose to a splendor and a noonday prosperity."

INTERMEDIATE

4. List the words which the author uses to describe the two directly, such as "The Hebrew shepherd boy," "Pure, innocent, noble-hearted girl." Which of the two would seem more to get our sympathy on this basis? --The actual characterization of the two offers no particularly sharp contrast. DeQuincey does not appear to be shaping a particular response to David but chiefly to be inviting our compassion for Joan. Thus, nothing in his language tends to deny the "greatness" of either figure, but the emphasis is upon Joan's tragic failure, in contrast with David, to enjoy the slightest fruit of victory.

5. Why, then, does DeQuincey even bring in David? Couldn't he have gained the same effect by describing only Joan? --The question is perhaps not as easy as it appears. What purpose is actually served by a contrast of this kind? Perhaps the simplest answer is that radically different outcomes of the two basically similar careers appeal to our sense of injustice and hence of sympathy and sorrow for the tragedy of Joan.

DIFFICULT

6. The passage begins with a question. What answer, if any, has been given by the end of the discussion? -- The initial question is, of course, not directly answered. That is, DeQuincey never says "We must think such-and-such about Joan." But the comparison and contrast moves to the climactic exclamation "Pure, innocent, noble-hearted girl!" and it is clear that we are invited to "think" of the nobility of a life, fully as heroic as David's but conducted without a thought or a taste of the power and glory which were David's.

IV. Browning's "Up at a Villa. See Student Version.

The speaker of this monologue is one of Browning's delightfully chatty Italians, full of gusto for "la dolce vita"--which for him means city life, with its mixed beauty and bloodiness. He unmistakably states his choice in the first stanza; from then on the contrast appears in alternating stanzas. The point of view controls then not only the choice of details but the slant he gives them: students might work with concretions chosen from nature --wheat, hemp, bees--which ordinarily connote a pleasant scene but to him are "sharp," "stinking," and "tiresome." In addition, they might notice how this first- person technique--consequently lacking an authorial commentator--allows the fellow to reveal his own "immoral" attitude. They might try to determine whether he is a "good guy" or a "bad guy" when he lumps together by juxtaposed rhyme the "new play, piping hot" and the "three liberal thieves were shot" without any apparent sense that one spectacle is much different from the other. Here one might relate the bubbling speaker and the splashing fountain (calling attention to the wonderful sound-effects of words like "spouts," "sings," and "flash") to show Browning's lack of "moral" comment but rather delight in an attitude seeing all city life as great sport--and the consequent irony that one must pay for it all.

Comment on Questions

SIMPLE

1. Does each stanza concern itself exclusively with either the city or the country? Does the speaker keep an even balance between the two or is one stressed more than the other? Why? --An outline of the stanzas will disclose a pretty fair balance

between the villa and the city, with a tendency to devote one--and even two--complete stanzas to one or the other. The student might compare this procedure with the far more rapid alternation of "inside" and "outside" in "Creole Courtyard. Browning's speaker is a "character," who is not concerned with offering a neat, side -by-side comparison but who indulges in protracted musings on the indignities of rural and the delights of urban life. It should be noted that the final emphasis--in both the last and next-to-last stanzas--is upon the imagined joys of the city, which are the subject of the longest stanza.

2. Don't you usually consider a mountain-edge, a tulip, a cypress-tree, and bees as pleasant, even beautiful objects? What terms does the speaker use to describe them? Why?--The student should see that the vexatious features of country life, if described by a more appreciative speaker, might appear delightful. The images and adjectives through which the unfavorable picture of life in the villa emerges are those of a bored, worldly, rather silly man who has no capacity for satisfaction from the surroundings of simple nature.

3. What reason does the speaker give to explain why he cannot live in the city? Has he planted this idea elsewhere in the poem? Where?--The speaker's candid recognition that he simply cannot afford to live in the city, which appears in the final stanza, is, of course, anticipated in the poem's opening lines. This may lead to speculation that the apparent delights of city life simply represent a case of "the grass being greener," that we recognize, although the speaker perhaps does not, that much of the charm of urban existence may lie precisely in the fact that the speaker cannct achieve it.

INTERMEDIATE

4. What city activities does he enjoy? Do you agree that they add up to "the greatest pleasure in life"?--The sources of city pleasure must be seen as those which would appeal largely to a superficial, gossipy, self-indulgent and rather childish sort of man. The better students should be able to see that it is largely because the speaker is naive and "countrified" that he is fascinated by sights and sounds which would be commonplace and even tawdry for a cophisticated city-dweller. His naivete is nowhere clearer than in the aspects of the fountain he chooses to dwell on or in his undiscriminating reaction to the dead thieves or the ecclesiastical and policitcal notices.

5. Ordinarily the last items in series are the most important. Do you think the religious procession in stanza 11 is the most important to our man?--This question should prompt the student to reflect that the speaker is hardly the sort of person for whom a religious procession, in its true significance, would have much appeal. If the procession is important for him,we can judge that it will be on grounds which have little to do with true piety

--and this turns out to be the case, for it is as a spectacle and temptation to dancd to the music that the procession is described.

6. Who is Bacchus? Is it fitting that the speaker swears by him?--The speaker's willingness to swear by Bacchus, god of wine, is an early key to the self-indulgent, often sensual motives which tend to dominate his dreams of the city. The more imaginative student may find in this idle oath something of the naivete which appears elsewhere in the speaker's unconscious self-characterization. It is a silly oath of the kind that might be uttered by a man who considers himself a gay blade, a "high liver."

7. Poets often use "sound-effects" words to enforce the sense of the passage. Can you find any such words in the description of the fountain?--Most students will be able to locate the obvious "sound effects" in the underscored bangs, and tootles. Having done this, they may be led to search for more subtle instances of the way in which "the sound can be an echo to the sense" and to discover, for instance, that a phrase like "our Lady borne smiling and smart" tends to convey, in its brisk, easy alliteration, something of the light, frivolous, and very irreligious impact which the procession has upon the speaker. Other examples of "sound effects" can be found elsewhere in the poem as well, and some students will probably discover them in phrases like "prance and paddle and pash" or the bees who "keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs."

DIFFICULT

8. Rhyme is a way of linking words and thus ideas. Do you usually see any difference between "new play, piping hot" and "three liberal thieves were shot"? Does the speaker?--This question is intended to reveal a kind of ironic "yoking" in which by one device or another (in this case, the link of rhyme) two widely disparate ideas are linked. Here, of course, the pleasurable prospect of a new play is tied to the distasteful news of the thieves' death. It seems clear that the speaker makes little discrimination between them and finds as much puerile satisfaction in the deaths as in the coming drama. The students' ability to see what the speaker does not and their further ability to recognize the evidence of the speaker's insensitivity offer a useful introduction to a basic form of irony (a term, by the way, which might profitably be introduced at this point).

9. Do the speakers in "Blow, blow, thou winter wind" share this man's attitude? Compare the two attitudes. -- The final question might prove, for the abler students, a useful assignment for a modest theme or writing exercise in which they establish the basis for comparison between the two poems and proceed to discover the sharp contrast in point of view which underlies them. Both poems speak of two ways of life, of which one is essentially urban, "sophisticated," and filled with social and even political activity, whereas

the other is essentially rural, natural, and remote from society. But the choices expressed in the two poems are almost direct opposites, the Duke's men expressing their preference for the life in the forest, despite its rigors, bitterly attacking the court world which, one judges, the speaker of "Up at a Villa" would find infinitely prefereable to his country solitude. The most penetrating student might go on from this to the most basic questions of "point of view," discovering in both poems something a bit extravagant and unrealistic, that in neither case are we asked to sympathize fully with the attitude expressed, although the "villa-dweller" is plainly a less attractive character than are the merry singers of the forest.

Suggested Activities

1. How would you continue the statement that "No man is an island"? or that "Life is like a football game"? (Here the teacher might pointout, particularly with the latter, the dangers of soupy sentimentality and false analogies.).

2. How does Eastern Oregon or Washington differ from Western Oregon or Washington? Obviously, in many ways. Choose one basis for comparison and expand your ideas.

3. Hearn in "A Creole Courtyard" created a striking comparison between inside and outside a house by using strong sense impressions. Try your hand at creating a sense of place--your kitchen, your science classroom, the corner drugstore--by choosing sense impressions which really express the place.

4. Work up a speech or debate on a controversial issue. It could be humorous (Resolved, That there is a Santa Claus) or serious: (Resolved, That Capital Punishment be Abolished.)

5. Try writing a poem based on contrasting attitudes. It could be a dialogue between a logger and a banker on the best way to make a living, or an argument between a mother and a daughter on wearing lipstick.

6. Could the method of contrast/comparison help you define something? Can't giving examples help create a good contrast/comparison? Isn't there some overlapping among the non-storied modes or organization? Is this a good thing?

7. Have you seen any obvious comparison/contrast in any of the stories you have read?

Lit/II/TV/F:C/D

OREGON CURRICULUM STUDY CENTER

FORM

PART FOUR: CLASSIFICATION AND DIVISION

Literature Curriculum II

Teacher Version

CLASSIFICATION AND DIVISION

This unit, as do all in the section on form, aims to show students one important process--classification and division--in operation. The introduction thus attempts to show how common and natural the process is; the models then demonstrate prime principles--clear basis, degree of completeness, no overlapping, purpose--of the process.

I. "Showboats," Philip Graham

Philip Graham's "Showboats" lends itself neatly to a demonstration of the principle that the parts of a good classification and division do not overlap. The paragraph structure makes this clear, with the first dealing with the size of the crew; second, salary; third, motives of the actors; and fourth, types--with sub-divisions here. They should see, too, that he follows an order, from the necessary economic details requisite for such a showboat to a description of what the audience comes to see: the actors, the most interesting of all. They might see that the divisions are not necessarily complete--there is far more material that might be covered. However, these are enough for one essay.

Sensitivity to Graham's use of language might result in their seeing the effectiveness of his similes; the migratory birds, the bridegroom. And he picks just the right concrete details--a well-combed pompadour, a big nose--to type the characters.

The questions should guide their awareness of these things. Students might want to classify heroes, heroines, or types of shows they have seen--not on showboats, of course--but on the modern equivalent, television and the movies, for an added exercise.

Comment on Questions

SIMPLE

1. This passage is divided into four paragraphs, and each one concerns itself with one of the four divisions of the larger class, Showboats. See if you can find out the four main divisions. Ask yourself, "What's the big idea that controls each paragraph?"--It is important that the student be challenged not only to note the distinctions between the four paragraphs but to state, in his own language, the principal topic or aspect of the showboat to which each is devoted. Adults will readily recognize that size, salaries, motives, and diversified characters of the showboat crew are terms which adequately classify the materials in the four paragraphs, but many a student is likely to seize on particulars within the paragraph and expand them into an inaccurate statement regarding the central mission of the entire passage (e.g., that the second paragraph describes "how the crew lived"). The essay, as a matter of fact, exemplifies the use of an initial "topic sentence" for each paragraph, a feature which should be made clear to the student.

2. Is there any overlapping between one division of the subject and the next? Prove your answer. --The student should recognize not only that there is no discernible "overlap" among the four paragraphs but also that this reflects the nature of Graham's literary undertaking and the means he has chosen to execute it. The task is simply to present four separate "aspects" or sets of facts about the showboat crew, understanding of no one of which is at all dependent upon the reader's prior possession of information about the crew. Perhaps the simplest proof of these assertions is that, if the order of the four paragraphs were completely changed around so that, for example, the first and final paragraphs were substituted for one another, the essay might be less attractive but certainly not less intelligible. What the student should ultimately recognize here is that "Showboats" involves a kind of exposition in which division and classification are not rigorously dictated by logical or chronological "steps" or sequence but are governed by the author's choice as to what seems the most interesting order in which to present materials which possess no intrinsic priority.

INTERMEDIATE

3. Why does Graham use the order that he does? Why does he begin with the size of the crew and end with a description of the actors? --The order actually chosen by the author (and, it should be noted, not firmly imposed upon him by his material) obviously involves growing complexity, color, and "subjectivity." He moves, that is, from matters of demonstrable and rather simple fact (the size of showboat crews and the general facts about their financial affairs) into areas in which he must select examples, interpret, and even speculate somewhat. The student may, in his own language, reveal an awareness of Graham's own "showmanship," of the fact that he begins with the unvarnished facts and progresses, with a sense of "build-up," from simple statistics and rather general observations to a final and longest paragraph which is full of lively, diversified, and rather subtle characterizations.

4. The author clearly has not told us everything there is to know about showboats. Can you suggest a more specific title that would indicate the particular aspect of showboats with which this essay deals? Can you think of the titles of similar short essays dealing with other aspects of showboats which would be interesting to learn about? --The essay, as the student should be aware, deals itself with only one aspect or classification of the many different facts about showboats that might be of interest. The student ought to be able to produce some such title as "The Crew of the Showboat" in answer to this question and should be able to suggest that other divisions of the general topic of showboats might involve things like their appearance and structure, their routes, the performances they presented, or the nature of their audiences. This might be a good occasion for pointing out that the selection of a topic (or a title) for an entire essay is often, in itself, the result of "classification and division," and that a whole essay can often be seen as addressing itself to one division or class of a larger subject.

5. Notice the comparisons he makes. What kind of effect does he suggest when he compares the leading man with a bridegroom, "necessary but not much talked about"? And why compare the wandering actors to "migratory birds"?--In this essay, as in the others, the student should be alert to the fact that a single mode of organization, in this instance division and classification, by no means prevents the author from employing, at the same time, such devices as comparison or the use of examples in particular parts of his work. The particular figures which are pointed to lend color and meaning to details in the essay by comparing the rather "special" showboat world to things which are more widespread and familiar, but the student should see that this device, here employed for only a limited purpose, might provide the underlying structure for an entire essay.

DIFFICULT

6. What concrete details does he use to make us see the characters? Why should the heroine have big eyes and carry roses? Why does the clown have a sad expression? Do details of this kind point to a general conclusion about the difference between the real characters of the showboat actors and the parts they are given to play?--The final paragraph is considerably more complex and sophisticated than the preceding ones, and only the abler students should probably be required to consider it in any great detail. They, however, should recognize that the showboat repertory not only required certain uniform, old-fashioned "stock" roles (ingenue, villain, leading man, comedian) but that the actors themselves tended to be recognizable "types," although their personal qualities were often at sharp variance with those of the parts they were required to play.

II.. Ross's "The School Store"

This journalistic column, by a writer of "familiar essays" and light verse, looks at the school store from the point of view of a nostalgic adult. The student should be able to understand this point of view, although probably not to share it completely. He may discover, in the mock-solemn words and phrases (Duty, Nourishment, Romance, sustained and fortified, pretentious nonsense, art lovers, etc.) and in the catalogues of the store's wares or the boys' conversation, that the author is very gently and affectionately "spoofing" the boyhood world of forty years ago. It would be very wrong to take the essay too seriously; at most, the author is attempting to convey the flavor of a remembered part of his youth and to suggest his present, grown-up attitude toward that memory. To do this, however, he has organized his essay with considerable care, and the student should become aware that principles of form are as necessary in this kind of relaxed, "newspaper column" kind of writing as they are in more complex and ambitious works.

Comment on Questions

SIMPLE

1. Why does the author, who is writing about a school store

of forty years ago, begin his essay by talking about what a school store generally means today?--The author is faced with the necessity of defining his central term, the common meaning of which has shifted over the past four decades. In effect, he must dismiss the current meaning of "school store" and offer his own, old-fashioned definition. This is easy to see, but the more able student should also recognize that part of the writer's purpose is to compare the present with the past and that the sharp contrast between the two kinds of store eloquently suggests "how times have changed."

2. How does the author use the words on the store window, "School Supplies - Candy - Sundries" to help organize or give form to his essay? Can you find clear subdivisions within any principal section of the essay?--The school store may be a "jumble," but the author plainly seeks to attain some order in his description of it. The "departments," as suggested on the front window, offer him the opportunity to do this. He suggests in the fourth paragraph that this will be his principle of order. The ensuing paragraphs are arranged according to these topics, and the increasing space devoted to each "department" (one paragraph to the first, two to the second, four to the third) reflect the degree of interest which each has for the author. Subdivisions of the "sundries" section may also be noted. There is first a general description of its miscellaneous contents, than an accoutn of items specifically sought, then a discussion of random "browsing" which leads into the paragraph on random boyhood conversation.

3. Which part of the store is referred to by each of the three words, Duty, Nourishment, and Romance? Why does the author use these rather high-sounding words to describe areas of the store? --The student should find, in the author's substitution of his own words for those on the store window, an indication that the original terms were inadequate to describe the meaning which the store had for him. The words are, indeed, highfalutin' to the eyes of an adult or even a present-day youngster and would probably not have been applied to the store even by the schoolboy of the twenties, yet they indicate, not inaccurately, how welcome was the store in the rather narrow lives of the city boys of that period.

INTERMEDIATE

4. By now you should see how classification and division play an important part in organizing the essay. Does this principle account for the form of the entire essay? Can you find examples of comparison and contrast? Does the author describe things by example? Does he offer any definitions?--The student should recognize that "classification and division," while it orders the major and central portion of the essay, does not account for the form of the entire piece. He should note that the opening paragraphs offer a comparison and contrast between two kinds of "school store" and that, since two meanings of a single term are being compared, the comparison involves "definition," definition of the "old" store being by far the more extended and elaborate. He should find several brief, informal definitions

in the description of the store's contents (e.g., slicker, transfer picture, sun picture). Moreover, since the description of each "department" seeks only to indicate the kind of thing to be found and not to give a complete inventory of its contents, the author is offering "examples." And in the final paragraph it may be said that there is an implied comparison between the author's own sons and the boys of an earlier period who found, as today's youngsters cannot, such great satisfaction in the school store.

5. Why are bubble gum and cap pistols referred to as "instruments of inattention and disorder?" What does the author mean by "shamefully truncated form?" Why do Ma Korzibsky and storekeepers like her have to be "people of infinite patience?" What does the author mean when he says that "our talk was full of Sundries--as it was full of Romance?"--The author's deliberately elaborate language, obvious enough in its meaning for adults, may elude the student. He should be able to see, in the selected examples, the author's obvious exaggeration and he might be encouraged to restate the various phrases in "plain English." Thus bubble gum and cap pistols are clearly things which distract attention and make noise, the author laments the fact that (probably because of inflation) familiar pieces of candy have grown smaller, Ma's patience is considerable (if not "infinite") because small boys must take a long time in selecting candy. The final characterization of the boyish talk is, admittedly, somewhat elliptical. A student who saw that the talk, like the contents of the "Sundries" department, was random, wildly diversified, and delightfully aimless and impractical would probably come pretty close to indicating the author's literal meaning.

DIFFICULT

6. How seriously must we take everything the author says? Do you think he really believes that the school store was "subversive of youthful morals and health?" Is he really glad, for the sake of his own sons, that the old kind of school store has disappeared?--Again, the student should be aware of the author's occasional, rather humorous exaggeration. Subversive--a word which may require definition--reflects a "stuffy" view of the school store, perhaps the view of the "elders and betters" of forty years ago. The more sensitive student should probably be able to see that, though the writer is today an adult, his affection for past is great enough so that, while he acknowledges the judgment which respectable modern adults might have of the old school store, it is one he does not really share.

7. Why does the author suggest that his own sons would not find the old school store very interesting? Do you agree that they --or you--would not?--This open-ended question is intended to stimulate rather free-wheeling discussion. Whether the students will conclude that today's youth would, indeed, find little satisfaction in the simple delights of the past is not really the point. The fact is that the author's relaxed "description" has terminated with an "opinion," which, if the essay is successful, should invite the student to discussion, agreement, or disagreement.

8. At the beginning and again at the end of the essay, the author talks about "wasting time." Does he approve of wasting time? Do you agree with his attitude? --Again, an open-ended question invites the students to consider whether time spent in the school store was really wasted--and even to ask the essential meaning of "wasted time." The more imaginative youngsters might find it interesting to ponder the final sentence of the essay, particularly as it represents the author's attitude toward his own life in a changing world.

III. Bishop's "Fish"

The third makes use of classification and division, though not in quite so obvious a fashion as the first and with a more thoughtful purpose. Elizabeth Bishop's poem deals with a common situation: catching a fish and reeling him in. Once we get beyond a first impression of its size and "grunting weight" we see it piece by piece --first, the skin; then gills, entrails, eyes, and lip. As the classification proceeds, we see a continual pattern of mingled beauty and ugliness. On his skin are rosettes--but of lime. The pattern of floral loveliness set against realism occurs in the lines "and the pink swim-bladder/like a big peony." Finally the poem leads to the mouth, embedded with hooks and line. Not explicityly stating the idea, the poet makes this detail the central one: it shows the toughness, the heroism of this venerable old warrior. His heroism and glory expand outward, until everything becomes "rainbow, rainbow, rainbow." Even to this moment details often thought crudely realistic contribute to the emotional and visual intensity: oil scum on a pool of bilge begins the spread of rainbow.

The conclusion, again not explicitly spelled out, is what we feel is right. She, sharing in the moment of glory, lets the victorious fish go. Here the students--it is hoped--would react in the same way.

Comment on Questions

SIMPLE

1. In what order do we see the parts of the fish? First we get a general impression of his large size and weight, but then we see him more precisely. How would you divide and classify the kinds of things we learn about the fish? --The student should not only note the several aspects of the fish (skin, gills, inner flesh and entrails, eyes, and lip) which are described but also that--unlike such a selection as "Showboats"--the effect of this poem depends crucially on the order in which its parts are arranged. Whether the poem is viewed as primarily descriptive or "storied," it has sufficient narrative element to serve as a chief principle of order.

2. Is her order of classification and division the same sort you might find in a textbook for science class? --Although the style and the particular details of the description are assuredly not scientiric, the actual categories employed might actually appear in a textbook

account of this type of fish--a fact which makes the discovery of the hooks (which certainly would not be involved in such an account) the more striking by contrast. This might be a good occasion for reminding the student of the tremendous diversity of literary effects which can be attained by modes of formal organization that appear quite similar.

INTERMEDIATE

3. Is this fish beautiful or ugly? What details would you use to prove your point? What would you make of this: on his skin are "shapes like full-blown roses" (beautiful things, are they not?) but those shapes are "stained and lost through age."--A careful answer to this question will involve the student in some rather subtle reflection and the teacher would probably not be wise to insist on a single "right" answer. Certainly one reader may find a disturbing ugliness in the colors and shapes whose intrinsic beauty has been "stained and lost" and in the language of freshness and beauty which is used to describe destructive or distasteful objects like the barnacles or sea-lice or the fish's gills. The best students may push things one step further and discover, in this strange amalgam of the beautiful and the ugly, the fierce and the pathetic, the source of the poet's compassion and reluctant admiration for the fish.

4. The writer never comes right out and tells us what has happened when she talks about the "five big hooks/grown firmly in his mouth." What do they indicate about the fish? Why are they like medals?--The fish-hooks can furnish an elementary exercise in the recognition of literary symbols. They are, clearly, not evidences of the fish's present suffering but the token of past encounters which the fish has survived, "medals" in the sense that they are the somewhat tattered but honorable symbols of old battles, honorably won. The student who grasps this meaning should be encouraged to see how much of the effect of the image depends on his own powers of inference and imagination.

5. Is it actually possible for victory to "fill up" a boat? What emotional effect is the writer talking about? How does this feeling grow from her whole experience of catching a fish?--The student should not only grasp the intention of the "victory" metaphor, with its powerful suggestion that the sensation of victory is overwhelming and crowds all else from the "boat" (and the poet's awareness), but he should see the importance of this line's occurring where it does. For it is only after the poet has inspected the fish, discovered the hooks, recognized the true character of the old warrior she has captured, that the complete dimensions of her "victory" become clear.

DIFFICULT

6. What realistic--and emotional--facts then make up "everything" when she says "everything/was rainbow, rainbow, rainbow"? --Most students will probably grasp the literal "happening" involved in the "rainbow" lines and the fact that, as they have doubtless seen

for themselves, oil on water can convey the effect of a spreading, all-embracing rainbow. A second, more subtle step is involved in the recognition that this physical occurrence accurately reflects the triumphant state of the poet's mind--that "Everything" refers not only to the physical or "real" event but to her inner state of complete delight in victory over the fish. And, finally, the most astute student may point out that the beauty and elation represented by the "rainbow" have their source only in the rather ugly phenomenon of oily bilge-water, so that this image, too, is compounded of the ugliness, beauty, and triumph which pervade the poem.

7. She does not really explain why, but we feel that we know why she let the fish go. Why was it? Would you have done the same? --Again, the student should not be pushed toward a single "right" answer to the question. Most students will probably be able to see that there is a mixture of pity and admiration in the poet's final feeling toward the fish. Some, too (particularly if they have done much fishing themselves), will point out that the "victory" consisted in capturing rather than keeping the fish (realists might suggest that he certainly is not represented as being very edible!). And a few of the most discerning may try to indicate that the "rainbow" moment is not merely one of victory over a tough old adversary but a more complicated and elusive combination of triumph, beauty, pity, even terror, to which the keeping of the fish would only appear as an anticlimax.

8. Why, now, do you think she classifies the parts of the fish in the order that she does? What do we see about the skin that helps us to begin to understand what he has been through? Why does the author put this detail before the description of the mouth?--This final question more or less comes full-circle, posing the original question about the order of the poem's parts in a way designed to encourage a more searching and sensitive understanding of the entire poem. In effect, the poem involves a growing awareness, a capacity to see more and more about the fish, to infer from what can be seen facts about what cannot be seen, and a final, rather complex emotional response to the whole of what has been discovered. An ordinary fisherman would notice only that he had captured a huge, inert, ugly, battered old fish. But this is a poet-fisherman who can see beauty in ugliness, fierceness in passivity, the flesh beneath the skin and the story behind the imbedded fish hooks, so that her orderly "description" is, in reality, an account of imaginative discovery and of intense emotional reaction.

IV. Shakespeare's "As You Like It"

The last selection is the most complex of all--not because of the language (although students will certainly need help with words like mewling, pard, pantaloon, and sans), but because of its implications. This well-known speech delivered by the melancholy Jacques, that interloper in the Forest of Arden, is a collection of Renaissance commonplaces--which nevertheless seem fresh with each reading. The notion of the world as a stage should probably be somewhat new to juniorhigh students; at any rate, they should see this as a metaphor which introduces Jacques' division of man as an actor, playing seven roles.

Discussion might profitably concentrate on the literal statement, the concretions by which Shakespeare characterizes each of the seven periods. The first three should give no trouble, but the section on the soldier might require some expansion: however, relating the phrase "jealous in honor" to any young hothead's reaction to a supposed insult to his honor should show that Shakespeare's phrase is merely a different way of stating a not unfamiliar reaction. And "Seeking the bubble reputation/Even in the cannon's mouth" should point to several ideas: that he seeks a good reputation as a soldier in the thick of the fray--in the cannon's mouth. However, Jacques' undercutting of this search should be made clear: that reputation is still just a bubble. The justice's "wise saws and modern instances" are also like the sort of cliches and anecdotes the students' uncles tell them. As for the pantaloon, the richness of the phrase well sav'd should be pointed out: it is an abstract term confirming many of the concrete ones in the poem; it is used ironically to show that what he has taken care of all his life, his property, is now of not much use to him.

Comment on Questions

SIMPLE

1. How does the metaphor of the world as a stage, with men and women merely players, introduce the main subject; the seven ages of man?--This question can be treated with some complexity. What most students can be expected to understand is at a fairly literal level, for they should be able to grasp that if life is compared to a theatrical performance, then the seven stages of man's life can be regarded as separate, successive acts. A more subtle view of the initial figure might be invited by asking what would be lost if the comparison to the stage were not made and the passage merely began with an assertion to the effect that life can be divided into seven parts. In this way, the student may be helped to see how a rather cynical view of life as "play acting" sets the tone for the entire speech and makes of man's life, as seen by the speaker, a spectacle of somewhat bitter amusement.

2. Is the picture that the speaker gives of the infant the same sort of picture you would see in advertisements for baby food?--The student should readily grasp the fact that Shakespeare's characterization of the infant is not conventional but far less sentimental and comforting than might be expected. And because the entire speech is, in a sense, a kind of self-characterization by the speaker, it seems natural to ask what kind of person would produce this unusual and rather disturbing view of infancy.

3. What does he suggest by calling the schoolboy's face a "shining morning face?" Is the comparison to a snail fitting?--The account of the well-scrubbed but slow and reluctant schoolboy should

present little difficulty for most students. Here, as elsewhere, they might be helped to appreciate the cynicism of the description by considering alternative, more orthodox and comfortable ways of describing "eager youth" on its way to school.

INTERMEDIATE

4. How does the speaker regard the lover? Are we to admire him? Feel sorry for him? Laugh at him? Give reasons for your answer. --Most students should know enough about the conventional portrayal of lovers (in movies, television, and popular songs, as elsewhere), so that they will find this account humorously un-loverlike. Furnaces tend to roar, rather than to sigh; the "woeful" ballad to the "mistress' eye brow" is a caricature of the lovesick youth, extravagantly praising the most trifling features of the beloved. Here, as throughout the speech, a stage of life which can be--and usually is --made to appear attractive has been presented as ludicrous and unappealing.

5. What does this line about the soldier literally mean: "Seeking the bubble reputation/Even in the cannon's mouth?" Do you think the speaker admires a soldier's career? --Reputation in these lines must be seen as meaning fame or glory and thus the soldier is represented as pursuing fame though it leads to the greatest possible danger--or perhaps even to death itself. This account might make military life seem entirely admirable, were it not for the word bubble, which, as the student should see, makes of fame a hollow and fleeting thing and throws grave doubt on the soldier's judgment, if not his courage. The best students may be led to recognize that these lines, together with the earlier emphasis on what is strange, jealous, "sudden and quick in quarrel," tend to stress the irrational and rather "senseless" aspect of military life.

6. Have you ever seen the character Pantaloon in a puppet show? Judging from this passage, how old would you say a man in the "sixth age" is? What has happened to the "good capon" (rather like fried chicken) that formerly lined his "fair, round belly?" What kind of voice is suggested by the words pipes and whistles? --Most students will probably not have seen Pantaloon in the puppet shows (but they may be interested to know that he has survived into the present day). It may be useful to point out that he is not only a silly old man but, traditionally, the butt or victim of the other characters' jokes. The loss of vigor and health and the approach of second childhood are essentially pathetic, but Shakespeare's language robs this stage of all dignity--and hence of any claim on our compassion. His emphasis is, indeed, upon the "clownish" aspect of old age, a point the student may be helped to grasp if, once more, he considers other, more sympathetic ways in which old age might have been described.

DIFFICULT

7. What kind of attitude does the speaker apparently have toward the characters he is describing? One way to see that point

of view is by the verbs he chooses. How do you react to words like mewling and puking? or whining and creeping for schoolboys? Look for other words that express the speaker's attitude. --Most students can doubtless discover that the "seven stages" are represented in a generally unattractive light, with nothing of beauty, dignity, or wisdom to redeem the spectacle. The better students, however, might consider the subtler question of the precise "tone of voice" adopted by the "melancholy Jacques." His description is not truly savage or disgusting. The early stages of life are seen as essentially undignified, silly, or unreasonable; the "justice," perhaps the closest approach to well-being, is plainly smug, self-indulgent, and "stuffy." The sixth stage emphasizes loss, and this is obviously intensified in the last stage; the student may find here the final domination of the "melancholy" note over the somewhat humorous and colorful quality of the earlier characterizations.

8. The division of man's life into stages, in each of which he plays a different "role," clearly gives form to the speech. In what way does this plan further help the speaker to convey his attitude toward human life? --This admittedly rather advanced question is designed as a reminder--at least to the better student--that form is not merely a way of ordering a literary composition but that it is a means, deliberately chosen to achieve a particular end. In this instance, the basic idea of a stage on which man is destined to play a succession of roles emphasizes the frail and fleeting character of all of life. Moreover, this procedure allows the author to disregard the continuity and variety which are actually true qualities of any man's life and concentrate instead upon a series of single characterizations, in each of which he can select and focus upon only those details which enforce his basically cynical view of the human condition. Here, as is so often the case, "classification and division" crucially involve selection, and selection is plainly governed by a sense of artistic purpose.